

Abyei

This book offers a special account of Abyei and its peculiar history from the sons of the region. It is a major addition to our understanding of Abyei. The book makes a strong case that if its border status between Sudan and South Sudan is resolved, Abyei can become a bridge, not a barrier, to fostering a sustainable and mutually beneficial partnership between the two countries. The book is written in a style that seamlessly turns personal experience and professional knowledge into a vernacular that lay persons can easily understand. It is a summary of the political history of Abyei with high authority.

—*Dr Mehari Taddele Maru*

Abyei is a rare and typical African story, a land and people on the wrong side of the border who for historic generations have made their ways and have provided neighbors and the world with deep insights into how to live in managed harmony with one's different neighbors. The story is told by heirs of the chiefly family that made reputations for making peace among tribes and competing ways of life and later among states and nationalist movements with great powers looking on. Exemplary stories, politically skillful, warmly human.

—*William Zartman, Jacob Blaustein Distinguished Professor Emeritus of Conflict Resolution and International Organization, The Johns Hopkins University*

The small territory of Abyei, situated strategically along the waterways that both conjoins and separates Sudan with South Sudan, has evolved from being a bridge over a national political divide, to a battlefield in two civil wars, and now an international "hot spot" affecting the wider region. The territory's owners and permanent inhabitants, the Ngok Dinka, have produced leaders who have at times promoted peaceful coexistence and reconciliation between the peoples of the region, and at other times led the fight, both militarily and diplomatically, for South Sudanese self-determination and independence. Many came from the family of the early paramount chief, Arop Biong, and his grandson, the renowned Deng Majok. In this book prominent members of that family—diplomats, veteran soldiers, and scholars—attempt a comprehensive examination of Abyei's troubled history and its current status. They correct some of the common misconceptions about the territory and answer specific criticisms aimed at the Ngok leadership.

Part collective autobiography of an extended family, part forensic examination of the failures of past agreements, and part blueprint for future resolution and reconciliation, it is a book that should be read by all those concerned not just with the future of Abyei and justice for its people and their neighbors, but for the future peace of both Sudan and South Sudan.

—*Douglas H. Johnson, author of The Root Causes of Sudan's Civil Wars*

Francis Deng and his colleagues have written an essential, must read book for anyone who is interested in the role Abyei and its people have played in the recent history and politics of both Sudan and South Sudan. Abyei has been one of the most important geographic and historical cross roads between the north and south, between the visiting Misseriya Arab herders and the Ngok Dinka who have long resided in the area. This book explores in great detail the political, ethnic and security background and fault lines that made the drafting of the Abyei Protocol a critical part of the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) and which continue today to make Abyei a contentious issue between the governments of Khartoum and Juba.

—*Ambassador Johnnie Carson, former Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, 2009-2013*

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Between The Two Sudans

Edited by

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Part One:

Abyei in Context



Introduction

Francis Mading Deng

This book is a positive outcome from an adversarial relationship between South Sudanese leader Bona Malual Madut and a group of Ngok Dinka leaders in the government of South Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement and its Army (SPLM/A). It is the result of an optimistic search for opportunities in crises. The conflict between Bona Malual and Ngok leaders over political relations was having a negative impact on the inter-communal relations between Bona Malual's section of the Twich Dinka and the Ngok Dinka people, who had historically and culturally been very close kindred and virtually one people but suddenly found themselves at odds. Abyei's geographical position between Sudan and South Sudan, belonging officially to neither, means that Abyei's people, the Ngok Dinka, lack the protections, social services, or development a state typically provides; they wish to resolve this statelessness condition. Given Bona Malual's connections with the leaderships of both South Sudan and Sudan, who are contesting the status of Abyei between their two countries, his hostile relationship with Ngok leaders was also having a negative impact on the resolution of the case of the Ngok Dinka of Abyei. What was essentially a power struggle between these national leaders was having a negative effect on the relations between their ethnic communities, the Ngok Dinka of Abyei and their neighboring Twich tribe to the South.

As Bona Malual is a friend and a long-time partner in public service, quite apart from the negative implications of the conflict for our people, including

one of the editors of this book, I felt compelled to do what I could to help resolve the crisis. Years of efforts eventually resulted in reconciliation talks that ended the conflict and restored unity and cooperation between Bona Malual and the concerned Ngok Dinka leaders. These talks also fostered joining efforts in pursuing the cause of Abyei with the leadership of both South Sudan and Sudan.

It was however at precisely the time that reconciliation talks were underway that Bona Malual's controversial book, *The Ngok Dinka of Abyei: Not Yet South Sudan*, was published. As the title indicates, not only is the book a statement of Bona Malual's grievances against the Ngok leaders with whom he was in conflict, but it was also an indictment of the Ngok Dinka assertion of their identity and affiliation as South Sudanese. In many ways, it was an affirmation of the Sudan government's position on Abyei and a justification of the adversarial attitude that is recently being reflected by some elements in South Sudan toward the unresolved crisis in Abyei.

Despite the reconciliation, the people of Abyei felt that it was necessary for them to present their position on the allegations against their leaders in Bona Malual's book. In my discussion of the issue with Bona, he fully appreciated the position of the Ngok Dinka and encouraged them to respond to the book quite freely. He hoped however that their response would bear in mind that the book was written at a time of a conflict that has been resolved, and that people have now reconciled. And indeed, Bona has repeatedly reaffirmed to me that he is now fully reconciled with the Ngok leaders and no longer holds any grudge against them.

The question we had to resolve for this book was whether our response should focus on refuting Bona Malual's allegations, or address the bigger and more important issue of Ngok Dinka identity as South Sudanese and make the case for resolving the final status of Abyei between Sudan and South Sudan. In the end, it was resolved that a balance be struck between the two approaches. This could be done by simply documenting the contribution of the Ngok Dinka to the liberation struggle of South Sudan, with minimum references to Bona's book. On my own, I undertook to write a response to the book in a manner that I hoped would be constructive and set a conciliatory tone, while others would focus on the role played by the Ngok Dinka in the wars of liberation between North and South Sudan.

In that connection, I should emphasize that the cause of Abyei is not only that of the Ngok Dinka, but is also collectively that of the Dinka ethnic group and South Sudan as a whole. The issue of Abyei's status should therefore be of concern to Bona Malual as a Dinka and a South Sudanese leader. That is why I

was particularly glad that I was able to reconcile him with the Ngok Dinka leaders, to join hands with them, to pursue the cause of their people of Abyei.

It is, however, unfortunate that Bona Malual's book is a record of adversity that can no longer be erased. Nevertheless, the responses of the Ngok Dinka to the book should be seen as a counter-balance that can help ease resentment to the book and reinforce the reconciliation that has been achieved. These responses reaffirm the unequivocal identification of the Ngok Dinka as South Sudanese, whose record in the wars of liberation of the South has been repeatedly demonstrated in their unwavering commitment, determination and bravery in the front line of military confrontation. Even those Ngok Dinka individuals who did not participate in the armed struggle contributed significantly to the cause of South Sudan in a variety of ways. Some of us, as Bona Malual himself knows, can indeed be said to have played crucial roles in the efforts that brought about both the Addis Ababa Agreement of 1972 and the Comprehensive Peace Agreement of 2005. Bona and I indeed worked very closely together for the cause of the South for decades.

Peace agreements of both 1972 and 2005 granted the Ngok Dinka of Abyei the right to decide whether to remain under the administration of North Sudan, to which the British annexed them in 1905 for administrative convenience and to provide them with better protection against Arab slave raiders, or revert to South Sudan. Either way, the governments in Khartoum blocked the implementation of the Ngok Dinka right to self-determination, and the post-conflict governments in South Sudan, weaker than the government in Khartoum, understandably refrained from confronting the governments in Khartoum over Abyei.

Historically, both before and during the British colonial rule, the traditional leaders of the Ngok Dinka pragmatically established cooperative relations with their Missiriya Arab neighbors to the North to protect their people. They also later exercised the choice given them by the British: to remain in the North to balance and reconcile the competing and potentially conflictual interests in their volatile border area. Our grandfather, Paramount Chief Kuol Arob, explained to the Dinka of the neighboring southern tribes, who had gone to try to persuade him to join the South, that he was there to protect their Dinka land; if he joined the South, those Arabs who entered the Abyei Area in their seasonal search for water and grazing and showed gratitude to the Dinka for being granted such access, would claim that the land is theirs. Chief Kuol assured the Dinka people that an opportune time for their joining the South would come—when they were strong enough to protect the land.

Our grandfather's argument was a prophetic forecast of what indeed happened decades later as the Ngok Dinka began to demand their right to return

to the South, and the South was not strong enough to support that right. It must be emphasized that Ngok leaders never compromised on preserving with pride and dignity their distinct sense of identity as Dinka and South Sudanese, for which they were indeed much admired by the British, as documented in various publications.

South Sudanese and some of the Ngok Dinka elements, not fully understanding and far less appreciating the strategic considerations behind the contextual decisions of those great Ngok leaders, now blame those leaders for their choices. In a radical departure from that strategic historical stance, although an understandable reaction to the contrastingly negative treatment the Ngok Dinka have experienced under Northern domination since independence, post-traditional Ngok leaders have been uncompromisingly committed to the principle of rejoining the South. Part of the confidence behind this principled position reflects not only their faith in the integrity of their legal right, but also their moral conviction, deeply rooted in their traditional religious belief system, that right will eventually prevail over wrongful exercise of power, and that they will in due course overcome oppression and obtain their entitlement.

The long-standing expectation that their South reentry right will prevail has so far remained an elusive dream or hope with determined efforts. As the balance of power between Sudan and South Sudan shifts against them, the Ngok Dinka believe that they are once again betrayed by a country for which they have contributed and sacrificed a great deal. The Ngok Dinka now live in a situation of virtual statelessness, without the protection, social services or development activities normally provided by the state. However, to be fair to the government of South Sudan, despite the current economic hardships in the country, it is supporting a semblance of local administration in Abyei, though with very limited services. But Sudan and the international community do not recognize this administration as legitimate. And because of Sudan government's hostile reaction to international support for the area, United Nations agencies and other governmental and non-governmental organizations are generally reluctant to undertake any development activities in the area. Furthermore, the implementation of the Abyei Protocol has come to a standstill.

Far from granting the people of Abyei the right to determine their destiny by the referendum provided for in the Abyei Protocol of the CPA, the government of the Sudan invaded Abyei twice, first in May, 2008, and again in May, 2011. Following the second invasion, the United Nations Security Council created the UN Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA) that is mostly composed of Ethiopian forces and is providing a much-appreciated protection, though limited in the territory it covers and the strength of its mandate to fully secure the area. Even after the deployment of UNISFA, the

area remains exposed to frequent attacks by armed elements from the North that are believed to be supported by the Sudanese army. Despite their desolation and desperation, the Ngok Dinka still believe that their dreams will eventually come true. Some pray to God and their ancestors for redemption, while others call on the international community to intervene and establish some form of international protection for their area.

Increasingly, though discreetly, the Ngok Dinka are beginning to wonder what options are available to them. For some, the wisdom of their forefathers is beginning to dawn on them. But the foundation of mutual respect, trust and balance of power, on which the traditional compact between the Ngok Dinka and their Missiriya Arab neighbors was founded, appears to have irretrievably diminished. What is left is the challenge of strategic optimism to make possible what seems impossible and to reconcile seemingly irreconcilable interests. Such a strategy must put into consideration lessons from the past that can inform the present to help determine the future. Building a future from the past is the challenge facing the Ngok Dinka and their leaders. Pessimism and despair cannot be an option; optimism and the creative search for practical alternatives must be the way forward.

For the most part, this book does not address that challenge. Instead, it is primarily an empirical account of Ngok Dinka solidarity with their kith and kin in South Sudan and their contribution to the liberation struggle of South Sudan, which they hoped would also liberate their area of Abyei. It is also a lamentation of a people who feel orphaned and abandoned by the government and leaders of South Sudan. And yet, they continue to entertain blind faith in what they believe to be an almost unanimous support for their cause among the people of South Sudan, despite a few, but vocal negative voices. The book is therefore an umbilical cord linking Abyei to the South and a record of noble achievements of a struggle in solidarity, combined with a sense of bitterness over real or perceived betrayal and a persistent commitment to the pursuit of unfulfilled dreams and expectations for a visionary future.

Expressly or implicitly, rightly or wrongly, Bona Malual is believed to have played a role in the failure of South Sudan to pursue the Ngok Dinka's cause of statelessness with patriotic diligence. Underlying the lamentation over the past is a cautiously optimistic hope for the future, including the positive role Bona Malual himself is hopefully now expected to play since his reconciliation with the Ngok leaders.

The book is divided into five parts. Part One comprises this Introduction, the Background and a chapter on the Historical Context of Abyei which provides a more detailed overview of the Ngok Dinka area and the challenges confronting them at the borders of the former Sudan, now divided into Sudan

and South Sudan. Part Two documents the experiences of the Ngok Dinka in the liberation struggle of South Sudan. Part Three is composed of two chapters on the theme of dialogue, both in reaction to Bona's book and in the reconciliation with him which provides a model for a bottom-up and top-down approach to the National Dialogue that President Salva Kiir Mayardit initiated in December 2016 and is currently underway in South Sudan. Part Four covers thematic issues pertaining to the political, legal and development challenges of the Ngok Dinka situation and discusses initiatives for the Interim Stabilization of Abyei, pending agreement on a final solution to the conflict over its status. Part Five is primarily the Conclusion which summarizes the basic themes of the book and the prospects for the future of the Ngok Dinka, but it also includes a Postscript which comments on a statement Bona Malual made in a press conference in Khartoum following the reconciliation with Ngok leaders and which reiterated the theme of his book and therefore also generated a hostile reaction from the Ngok Dinka.

I must confess that I was initially reluctant to be an editor of a book that is documenting an adversarial interaction between a dear friend and partner on many fronts over many years, and members of my family and community. On the other hand, for precisely the same reason, I endeavored to work for reconciliation between them, so distancing myself from this reaction to Bona Malual's book would also have been untenable. Some of my political critics in fact thought that given my friendship and close collaboration with Bona in public service, I could not be totally averse to the ideas in his book. I hope therefore that this book will be seen, especially by Bona Malual, as part of the efforts to mend fences and fully restore unity, solidarity and cooperation between him and his kindred and compatriots, the Family of Deng Majok and the Ngok Dinka of Abyei.

It must be emphasized that each of the chapter authors is fully responsible for what is in his chapter. We, myself and the other co-editors, are of course also responsible for our own chapters, but not for what is contained in the chapters of the other authors. Taken as a whole, however, whatever shortcomings or provocative materials or opinions are contained in the various chapters, the objective of the book is to clarify and strengthen the Ngok Dinka full identification with the people and country of South Sudan and the contribution the Ngok Dinka have made and continue to make to their historic struggle for the freedom and self-determination of the country as fellow citizens of South Sudan.

I must however add that full identification of Abyei with South Sudan need not be interpreted as hostility with the North. Abyei has historically played a constructive role as a bridge for peace, reconciliation and cooperation between

the North and the South under appropriate and conducive conditions. Abyei can and should indeed continue to play that role between the now two independent states of Sudan and South Sudan, should appropriate and conducive conditions be once again put in place to ensure peace, security, stability, mutual respect and dignity for all the communities on that sensitive, but strategically important North-South border.



Background

Francis Mading Deng

Abyei is a land of paradoxes and contradictions, embodying crises and opportunities. The name itself is an abbreviation of a more substantive description of the land that is ethnically based. The area is also known as Ngok after its people, the Ngok Dinka. During the early part of the 20th Century, it was referred to as Ngok of Kuol, after its Paramount Chief, Kuol Arob. It is indeed from the Abyei tree, under which Chief Kuol Arob held his court, that the area acquired its current name. The area has also been identified with other Paramount Chiefs at specific historical moments, including as Ngok of Jok, after its Founding Leader, Jok Athurkok, of the leading Pajok Clan. The usage now varies from Abyei of the Ngok Dinka to the Land of the Ngok, but the area is being increasingly referred to just as Abyei.

Although the Ngok have co-existed and interacted with their Missiriya Humr or Baggara Arab neighbors for centuries, and have selectively adopted some Arab cultural traits, they have fiercely resisted Arabic assimilation. Until very recently, when the adoption of newly introduced religions was associated with enrollment in religiously affiliated schools and Ngok children who attended schools in Northern Sudan became Muslims, very few Ngok individuals who migrated, settled in the Arab Muslim northern part of the Sudan, and were culturally assimilated, converted to Islam. Outside of this situation, hardly any Ngok Dinka in their homeland adopted Islam either. Inter-marriage with the

Arabs was extremely rare and only happened among those who had migrated and settled in areas of Northern Sudan. Racially, culturally and religiously, although the Arabs perceived themselves as superior to the Dinka, in an almost parallel vision, it is widely recognized that the Dinka see themselves as at least equal, if not superior to the Arabs, especially on moral grounds.

Despite their mutually condescending attitudes toward each other and occasional intergroup confrontation, the Missiriya and the Ngok Dinka co-existed and interacted quite peacefully for centuries. Even during the turmoil of the nineteenth century of slave trade and inter-racial and inter-ethnic violence, excepting periodic raids by Arab slave traders, their relations were relatively harmonious. This was largely due to the cooperative relations between their respective leaders who concluded friendship pacts and even performed rituals of kinship, having positive impacts on the relations between their tribes.

Ngok leaders became the intermediaries between the Arabs and their fellow African tribes to the South. Indeed, Ngok Paramount Chiefs sometimes secured the release of enslaved Southerners and returned them to their communities in the South. Chief Arob Biong, identified in British records as Sultan and even as Mek (King), was the first Dinka leader to visit the Muslim Revolutionary Leader, Mohamed Ahmed, known as the Mahdi, the Islamic Messiah. The two established a relationship through which Chief Arob secured the release of Dinka slaves that he returned to their respective southern tribes.

This bridging role between the North and the South probably contributed to the decision of the British colonial administrators in 1905 to annex the Ngok Dinka and the neighboring Twich and Ruweng Dinka tribes respectively in Bahr el Ghazal and Upper Nile Provinces to the Northern Province of Kordofan. These latter two southern tribes were later returned to the South while the Ngok remained under the administration of Kordofan in the North. The Ngok Dinka under Chief Kuol Arob and his successor son Chief Deng Majok were also given the option of returning to the South, but they chose to remain in the North as gatekeepers and a conciliatory bridge between the North and the South.

During the two wars of South Sudan's liberation struggle, the Ngok Dinka found themselves precariously poised at the border of the warring factions. In the first war, 1955-1972, Ngok area initially remained an island of peace as their Paramount Chief, Deng Majok, played a delicate balance of protecting his people by remaining loyal to the government while discreetly supporting the rebels. Toward the end of his life, this balance became increasingly difficult to maintain as the numbers of the Ngok who joined the struggle of the South continued to grow and the war encroached into Ngok Dinka territory. Chief Deng Majok's successor, Monyyak (Moyak) Deng, ironically a Muslim with the

name Abdalla, could not manage the difficult war situation: In response to his efforts to defend South Sudanese herders whose cattle had been wrongly seized by the Government Security Forces, those Security Forces assassinated him, two of his brothers and three uncles.

The 1972 Addis Ababa Agreement that ended the first war gave the people of Abyei the right to decide whether to remain in the North or return to the South. That provision of the agreement was never implemented, and the autonomous government of South Sudan refrained from making Abyei a source of resuming conflict with the North by demanding that right for the people of Abyei. The reaction of the Ngok Dinka at having their right revoked eventually generated a local rebellion that contributed to the resumption of hostilities and a return to full-fledged civil war in 1983.

The second war, 1983-2005, witnessed a more intense involvement by the Ngok Dinka from all walks of life, including traditional warriors without education, young men and women of various education levels, university students and graduates, and government officials. The Ngok would indeed distinguish themselves in the struggle; many of them rapidly rose to positions of leadership in the Sudan People's Liberation Movement and its Army, SPLM/A, that championed the struggle. Ngok Dinka members of the Movement also played a leading role in the negotiations that led to the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) of 2005 and in the post-war government of Independent South Sudan.

The CPA gave South Sudanese the right to decide through a referendum whether to remain in a United Sudan or be fully independent. That right was overwhelmingly exercised in favor of independence, declared on July 9, 2011. The Abyei Protocol of the CPA allowed the people of Abyei to choose through a referendum whether to join South Sudan or remain in North Sudan, to be exercised at the same time as the referendum of South Sudan's independence. This was the same option given them by the 1972 Addis Ababa Agreement. History was to repeat itself in that the government of Sudan blocked the implementation of the Abyei Protocol and the stipulated referendum was never held, preventing the Abyei people from choosing to belong to South or North Sudan. The government of independent South Sudan, like its predecessor of the Addis Agreement, also avoided confronting Khartoum over Abyei. In response, the Ngok Dinka ironically with the facilitation of the government of South Sudan, decided to carry out their referendum unilaterally, but it was rejected in its entirety by the Sudan government and the international community, nor was it endorsed by the government of South Sudan that had facilitated the referendum. Yet, South Sudan could not extricate itself from the cause of Abyei.

As a result, Abyei remained a flashpoint that twice erupted into violent aggression, the first in May, 2008, by the Popular Defense Force, PDF, a government-supported Arab militia, and the second again in May, 2011, by the Sudan Defense Force, SDF. These invasions almost generated a return to a full-fledged civil war in the wake of the 2011 attack, averted only by the timely intervention of the United Nations.

The area is now in a vacuum of state responsibility, with the government of South Sudan providing a semblance of administration that is both limited and not recognized by the Sudan government and the international community. The United Nations Interim Security Force in Abyei, UNISFA, created in the wake of the 2011 invasion, is providing a level of protection which, though much appreciated, is limited both in its mandate and scope of geographic coverage. Besides, by definition, UNISFA is an interim arrangement which cannot continue indefinitely. In this impasse, the people of South Sudan are beginning to show signs of exhaustion over the issue of Abyei, the result of which is that the case of Abyei has increasingly gone into oblivion. While the Ngok Dinka remain confident of the support of the people of South Sudan for their cause, this seeming neglect is becoming a source of some bitterness among them.

Another paradox of the Ngok Dinka situation is that their problematic location at the North-South border of the Sudan, also offered opportunities in crises. Their leaders appreciated the value of education at a time when education was frowned upon and resisted by the Dinka as a source of cultural alienation and moral degeneration. Ngok children attended schools in both South and North Sudan and therefore became cross-culturally better oriented to the complexities of the country than their fellow Sudanese in either region of the country. Indeed, although the racial, ethnic, religious and cultural diversities at their borders threatened their identity, those factors also sharpened their defense mechanisms, and contributed to their developing cross-cultural enrichment.

The benefits of opportunities in crises have contributed to yet another paradox in the Ngok Dinka situation. Although their level of education and cross-cultural awareness enabled them to rise to positions of leadership and influence in the country, that also became a source of competitive resentment and animosity on the part of some Southerners.

All this has contributed to a significant level of ambivalence about the statelessness cause of the Ngok Dinka among some Southerners. Increasingly, while the overwhelming majority of South Sudan stands firmly in solidarity with the people of Abyei, the ambivalences of Southerners in positions of leadership is having the effect of marginalizing the cause of the Ngok Dinka to a state of at least virtual neglect, if not active rejection. In this ambivalent

situation, personal differences become politicized, develop into inter-communal tensions, and degenerate further into national political confrontations that have far-reaching implications for the people of Abyei and the cause of their area, which should fundamentally be the collective cause of the people of South Sudan.

This book was inspired or, more correctly, provoked by a book written by Bona Malual, *Abyei of the Ngok Dinka: Not Yet South Sudan*, which represents yet another source of tension of the Ngok Dinka situation. Bona is a close friend to some of us in our family and his father was a close friend to our father. His K̄wac Section, of which his father was the Chief, is a branch of the Twich Dinka that was historically closely connected to the Ngok Dinka with which it was jointly annexed to the North in 1905, although Kwac was later returned to the South.

For a variety of reasons, Bona got into conflict with a number of Ngok Dinka leaders in the SPLM/A which, given his close ties to the leaders of both Sudan and South Sudan, was having a gravely adverse effect on the attitude of the two countries toward the cause of the Ngok Dinka. For quite a while, my efforts to intercede and mediate between the parties proved unsuccessful. The positions of the parties had hardened beyond retrieve. Eventually, the conflict seemed to ripen for resolution, and the parties agreed to talk.

We convened the reconciliation talks on January 27, 2017, but Bona's book came out at precisely that time. I received an advance copy and began to read it as the talks were about to start. The book was highly provocative and potentially threatening to the reconciliation talks. I tried to balance between informing the relatives about the book and its contents on the one hand, and ensuring that the talks not be derailed or undermined by the book on the other. The Ngok leaders understood and agreed not to succumb to any provocation that would adversely affect the reconciliation talks.

The talks succeeded beyond our expectations and reconciliation was fully effected. We then joined hands in strategizing for a unified approach to the Abyei problem. We kept the leadership of South Sudan, in particular President Salva Kiir Mayardit, fully in the picture about the talks and the joint initiatives on the case of Abyei. This resulted in Bona and me going to Khartoum to discuss the situation with the leadership and then to Abyei to brief the Ngok Dinka Community. The Governors of the States of Twich and Gogrial, together with the Chiefs of Twich, joined the public rallies and group discussions in Abyei. What began as a matter of personal relations had become a matter of inter-communal, national, and even international interest.

We would like to thank our relatives who are targeted by Bona Malual's book for their perseverance and wisdom in not allowing their reaction to that book

to endanger the reconciliation we had worked so hard to achieve. We are also grateful to all contributors to this book for documenting the contribution of the Ngok Dinka to the liberation of South Sudan beyond the narrow response to Bona's book. We must also express our appreciation to Bona Malual for welcoming and understanding the response of the Ngok Dinka to his book.

We sincerely hope that this book will contribute positively to a better understanding and appreciation of the case of the Ngok Dinka of Abyei between Sudan and South Sudan.

Abyei in Historical Context

Luka B. Deng Kuol

Introduction

Abyei was once described as the needle and thread that holds the north and south of Sudan together (Deng, 1986), but its ultimate political status is now in limbo between what has recently become two independent countries. The unresolved status of Abyei and its recurrent violence have their background in decades of violence (Johnson, 2008, Johnson, 2013, Deng, 2010, Mawson, 1991). To the Ngok Dinka, who are permanently settled in the area, and to the Missiriya, the neighboring people to the north, this is foremost a conflict over ownership of land and access to seasonal grazing. However, long-lasting hostilities have deepened the enmity and generated new grievances. Violence in Abyei was an integral part of the two civil wars which preceded South Sudan's secession. Abyei strategically and symbolically important to leaders in Khartoum and Juba. In addition, the Ngok and the Missiriya can also mobilize formidable fighting forces. In fact, they continue to be core constituencies to the ruling parties, the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) in South Sudan and the National Congress Party in the Sudan. The significance of the Abyei Area is reflected in the fact that one of the only six protocols of the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) between the

government of Sudan and SPLM deals exclusively with this conflict. This adds another layer of complexity to the local conflict, rendering it more intractable.

The area of Abyei currently settled by the Ngok Dinka has an estimated population of around 300,000 people. The delimitation of the area of the Ngok was the result of a long-lasting arbitration process that is binding on the governments of Sudan and South Sudan (Johnson, 2013). This process started with the report of the Abyei Boundaries Commission in 2005 and moved on to the ruling of the Permanent Court of Arbitration in 2009. Moreover, according to a decision incorporated within the CPA, a referendum over the future of Abyei was to be conducted simultaneously with that of South Sudan in January 2011. The government of Sudan refused to honor this part of the peace accord and rejected the African Union's subsequent proposal for the Abyei referendum to be conducted in October 2013 (Sudan Tribune, 2012). Frustrated by the stalled process, Abyei leaders and intellectuals organized a unilateral referendum on the future status of Abyei during 27–29 October 2013. The referendum was carried out without any officially recognized assistance. The Ngok Dinka participated in the referendum, but since the AU Proposal restricted the eligibility in the Abyei Referendum to the Ngok Dinka and other permanent residents, the Missiriya nomads did not participate. Sixty-three thousand four hundred and thirty-three voted in the referendum: 99.99% in favor of being annexed to South Sudan, with only 12 people voting in favor of belonging to Sudan. This gave an indication of where the preference of the Ngok Dinka lay and applied the necessary pressure on the two governments and the international community to resolve the impasse. But the process remains stalled: The African Union declared that the referendum was illegal and a threat to the peace; the governments of Sudan and South Sudan declared beforehand that the outcome would carry no weight (Sudan Tribune, 2013a, 2013b).

It was the tension and frequency of violence in Abyei since 2005 which prompted the Ngok Dinka leaders to try to force the issue of the referendum. Despite the continuous presence of United Nations peacekeeping forces at Abyei, the Sudan Armed Forces twice temporarily occupied the area after large-scale fighting, first in May 2008 and then again in May 2011 (Human Rights Watch, 2011). Moreover, clashes between the Ngok Dinka and Missiriya militias have caused widespread insecurity and devastation as well as displacement of the Ngok Dinka from their home areas. This violence is partly related to the Missiriyas' demand for access to grazing land in Abyei, but is also rooted in the larger contestation between Sudan and South Sudan, where people from the Missiriya were organized into local militias under the Popular Defence Force umbrella and many from the Ngok Dinka were recruited into the SPLA (Mawson, 1991, Johnson, 2008). In May 2013, the Paramount Chief of

the Ngok Dinka, Kuol Deng Kuol, who wanted Abyei to be part of South Sudan, was assassinated by Missiriya militias. President Salva Kiir accused the government of Sudan of being implicated in this murder, and it was cited as one of the reasons why the Abyei referendum of October 2013 was conducted (Sudan Tribune, 2013c). The people of Abyei and their leaders argue that the continuation of violence dictates why the issue of Abyei's status needs to be resolved sooner rather than later – not only to give the people of Abyei the protection they need but also to defuse an issue which can escalate into a new war between Sudan and South Sudan.

To resolve the Abyei predicament, a better understanding of its historical background is required. Why has the issue of Abyei come to gain such a prominent place in the political relations between Sudan and South Sudan? The purpose of this chapter is to trace the origin of the current contestation over the status of Abyei and to assess the impact of political violence in Abyei on the history of conflict between the government of Sudan and the people of the South. This chapter begins with a section giving the background of the Ngok Dinka and their arrival to Abyei, followed by a discussion of how the dispute over Abyei emerged and took shape. Subsequent sections deal with the place of Abyei in the process of Sudan's independence in the 1950s; political violence in Abyei during the first civil war (1963–1972); the resolution and (lack of) implementation of the Abyei issue in the 1972 Addis Ababa Peace Agreement; and finally, the eruption of political violence in the early 1980s in Abyei. Through this investigation, this chapter demonstrates that the issue of where Abyei should belong between North and South of Sudan gained political significance not only because of repressive violence from the government and its allies, but also through the people of Abyei's shared experience of political struggle against oppression.

The Ngok Dinka and their Arrival in Abyei

The Dinka of Abyei are generally known as the western Ngok, forming part of a larger ethnic, linguistic and agro-pastoralist group, the Padang, one of the main groups of the Dinka people. Oral history relates that the Ngok, together with other groups of the Padang, are descendants of people who 'began to push westwards' from the White Nile some 300 years ago, forced to migrate by an increasing population and pressure from Nuer advances (Stubbs and Morrison, 1938, Beswick, 1998:147). Historian Santandrea relates how the first three chiefs of the Ngok—Jok, Bulabek and Dongbek—lived and died east of the White Nile between Malakal and Lake No, and that the first chief to cross the river was Kuoldit, who led his people westward under pressure

from the Nuer and in search of grazing for their increasing number of cattle (Santandrea, 1968). Both Paramount Chief Kuoldit and his son, Monydhang, 'died and were buried' in the region of 'Demboloia', northeast of Abyei town on the Ngol River. Santandrea further recounts that Monydhang's son, Alor, invaded the territory of the Begi or Girma, and reached as far as today's Abyei town (1968). Chief Alor's son, Biong, settled south of Abyei, on the River Küir, in a place called Wunchuei, where he died and was buried. Historian Sabah (1978) concurs that, by the early nineteenth century, Chief Biong had settled in present-day Ngok land.

By 1810, the nine subsections of Ngok Dinka occupied the Abyei Area in two distinct groups: the original settlers (Abyor, Achweng, Anyel, Diil, Mannyuar and Mareng) and the latecomers (Alei, Achak and Bongo) (Henderson, 1939:58). It is argued that among the original settlers, the subsection of Abyor led by the Pajok lineage arrived first to the area and took the best places including Abyei town in the highlands, while Mannyuar, led by Dhiendior lineage, arrived later and occupied the next best areas (Beswick, 1998:148). The location of what is today's Abyei town became the home of the Paramount Chief and the hub of Ngok political and commercial affairs. Since settling in Abyei, the Ngok have shown a remarkable resistance against assimilation into the Arabic and Muslim cultural hemisphere of the northern Sudan (Beswick, 1998:157, Howell, 1951).

The Ngok Dinka of Abyei departed from the characteristic stateless Nilotes leadership and adopted a 'centralised' political structure similar to that of Shilluk (Beswick, 1998:145). By the twentieth century, the Ngok Dinka were ruled by a Paramount Chief with powers of imposing taxation, exercising supreme judicial authority and military leadership (Beswick, 1998:146). This unique trait can be illustrated by a combination of an internal struggle for leadership; external pressure from the north, particularly from the Missiriya; and the distinct ecological environment of the Abyei Area. The ecology of Abyei is characterized by a harsh climate, with a hot-dry season alternating with a rainy season during which large areas are flooded. Agricultural land is concentrated in one area circumscribed by sandy ridges, hindering seasonal migration and further facilitating a centralized political structure (Beswick, 1998:148).

The Ngok have coexisted with a number of neighboring groups, including the nomadic Missiriya Arabs, the Malual Dinka, the Awan Dinka, the Twich Dinka and the Ruweng Dinka, each of whose groups make seasonal use of the Abyei Area. The Missiriya Arabs have proven to be the most problematic of these neighbors, and have contributed towards recurrent political violence in the area, engaging in what amounts to a power struggle with the Ngok Dinka.

Most scholars recognize that the Muslim Baggara Arabs started moving along the savannah belt from the Kingdom of Wadai in French Equatoria

Africa (Chad), passing through Darfur and Kordofan in the eighteenth century. This migration was characterized by bitter fighting among the Baggara, which resulted in their division into four distinct groups: the Missiriya Humr (red), Missiriya Zurug (black), Hwazama, and Rizaygat (Beswick, 1998:149). The Missiriya Humr had arrived and settled in Muglad (Deinga) in south-west Kordofan by the late eighteenth century, and they became the immediate neighbors to the north of the Ngok Dinka at Abyei (Henderson, 1939). Initial relations between the Ngok Dinka and Missiriya were peaceful, and it is even argued that some sections of Ngok Dinka assisted the Missiriya in conquering their current areas of settlement in Muglad from the indigenous Shatt peoples (*ibid*).

The origin of conflict at Abyei

The arrival of the Turco-Egyptian regime to Sudan in 1821 changed the local balance of power in favor of the Missiriya, and this led the Ngok to adopt new defensive strategies against their northern neighbors (Beswick, 1998:151). During the period of the Turkiyya (1821–1881), the Turco-Egyptian authorities and private traders undertook slave raids on a considerable scale into what is today South Sudan (Salih, 1994). The Missiriya also raided the Dinka and other peoples of Bahr el Ghazal for slaves and cattle, becoming part of al-Zubayr Pasha's slave trading empire in Bahr el Ghazal (Johnson, 2008:3). As a consequence of ubiquitous slaves trading and increased ownership of slaves in Kordofan, the Turco-Egyptian regime in 1851 allowed Missiriya to pay their taxes in slaves (Beswick, 1998:151-52).

Under the leadership of Chief Arob Biong, the Ngok resisted these slave raids and fought off the Arab traders. Chief Arob Biong adopted various defensive strategies such as using age-sets as a 'standing-army' and electing 'war chiefs' for each village. In addition, Chief Arob Biong used diplomacy: He initiated relations with the chiefs of Rizaygat and Missiriya and he succeeded in forging an alliance with the Missiriya Chief, Ali Massar. Allegedly, Chief Arob and another Missiriya Chief, Azoza, ritually mixed blood to symbolize their special and brotherly relation (Deng, 1986:46).

The Turco-Egyptian regime became increasingly oppressive in the final quarter of the nineteenth century. The Messianic Muslim leader who became known as Mahdi, the 'Savior', fought them off. The Missiriya were among the first groups to convert to the cause of the Mahdi. In a bid to protect their people against slave raids at this time, the chief of Ngok Dinka and other Dinka chiefs in Bahr el Ghazal accepted the offer of truce by the leaders of the Mahdist uprising and forged a temporary alliance with the Missiriya to get rid

of the Turco-Egyptian regime (Beswick, 1998:153). This caused the collapse of the formal Egyptian administration in Bahr el Ghazal (Beswick, 1998:154). But with the fall of Turco-Egyptian regime in 1881 and the advent of the Mahdiyya, the rule of the Mahdi, relations between Missiriya and the Ngok Dinka rapidly deteriorated. To protect his people from slave raids and to win the confidence of the new regime, Ngok Chief Arob Biong with other sub-chiefs (including Alor Ajing of Mannyuar and Dhiel Yak of Achak) went to the north to give their allegiance to the Mahdi and to complain about Arab slave raids and robbery of his people (Kuol, 2014). After their return and in order to show their special relations with the Mahdi, Chief Arob Biong named one of his sons Mahdi, Alor Ajing named one of his sons Sobah (Arab name referring to east) and Dhiel Yak named one of his daughters Hawa (Arab name for Eve), following a traditional Dinka practice of naming children after specific events (Ibid).

Although the period of Mahdiyya was characterized by two decades of conflict and accompanying chaos, some scholars have argued that it was a relatively peaceful period for the Ngok (Deng, 1986:47). But there is evidence to suggest that the Ngok suffered and experienced slave raiding during this period (Johnson, 2002). But as a result of diplomatic initiatives by the Ngok Dinka leadership to improve relations across their North-South borders, their area was relatively spared from much of the havoc inflicted on the communities in the South. Their protective leadership also helped in unifying their people. The rise and fall of the Mahdist regime therefore had the indirect effect of enhancing the centralized political structure as well as strengthening the Ngok position in their relations with their Missiriya neighbors (Ibid). The Missiriya were divided between those who supported the Mahdiyya and those who opposed it. This split among the Missiriya over support of the Mahdi resulted in non-Mahdist Missiriya seeking asylum outside of Dar Missiriya (home of Missiriya). These expelled Missiriya were accommodated by Chief Arob Biong of the Ngok Dinka until the Anglo-Egyptian invasion in 1898 (Henderson, 1939:69). After the defeat of the Mahdiyya in 1898, the Missiriya were then reunited and returned to Dar Missiriya.

At this point, Ali Julia, a former marasala (messenger) of the Khalifa, the successor of the Mahdi, was recognized as nazir (head sheikh) by the new Anglo-Egyptian regime, which succeeded the Mahdiyya. (Henderson, 1939:69-70). Despite the good relations between the Ngok Dinka and the non-Mahdist Missiriya at the beginning of the Anglo-Egyptian condominium, the Mahdist Missiriyans returned to the Dar Missiriya with an assumption of leadership, generating greater inter-tribal violence. Ali Julia, the new Sheikh of Missiriya, encouraged and was responsible for conducting further slave raids against the

Ngok and Twich Dinka (Government of Sudan, 1903; Johnson, 2002), but it should be noted that this raiding was mutual, and that the Ngok enslaved Arabs captured during retaliatory strikes (Deng, 1978:138).h

During the Anglo-Egyptian regime, the Ngok Dinka consolidated their centralized political structure and enhanced the economic position of Abyei as a cross-border between the African south and the Arab north (Beswick, 1998:155). A new breed of Ngok leadership emerged. Kuol Arob, who became Paramount Chief after the death of his father Arob Biong in 1905, defended the Ngok Dinka from the Missiriyas' continued slave raids. As the Dinka were generally perceived as opposing the Anglo-Egyptian regime, the British administration initially tolerated the continued Missiriya/Arab Baggara raids in Dinka areas, including Abyei. In response to such challenges, the Mareng, a subsection of Ngok Dinka, found it necessary to defend themselves by allowing the Missiriya people free passage through their territory to Missiriya with their cattle and slaves after raiding in the south (Beswick, 1998:156).

Following a series of complaints from Ngok and Twich Dinka, the Anglo-Egyptian regime decided to place the victims and perpetrators of the slave raids under a single administration that would be better able to prevent and respond to such incidents (Daly, 1987). Thus, Ngok Chief Arob Biong and his people were placed under the administration of Kordofan province in March 1905 (Government of Sudan, 1903). After the rebellion of 1922 against British colonial rule that was led by Dinka officers in the Army, the British administration changed its anti-Dinka policy and tried to win the confidence of the Dinka people. Ngok Dinka Paramount Chief Kuol Arob subsequently pledged his allegiance to the Anglo-Egyptian regime and was recognized as Chief, not only of the Ngok but also of other neighboring Dinka sections including Ruweng and Twich (Beswick, 1998:156). The cooperative relations that developed between the British administration and the Ngok Dinka contributed to the gradual consolidation of the Ngok's centralized political structure. Moreover, the British colonial government now ended its previous tacit acceptance of Arab raids against the Ngok and ordered Ali Jula, the chief of Missiriya to comply with the government policy against slavery. (Deng, 1986:48).

This centralized political structure of the Ngok Dinka raised concerns among some British administrators in the South that this was a sign of Arabization. Although having no substantive foundation, this perception surely contributed to the British imposing the infamous 'closed districts' policy of 1922, the demarcation in 1924 of a new boundary lying 25–40 miles south of the Bahr al-Arab/Kiir in Dinka land, and development of the 'Southern Policy' in 1930, all of which contributed to the division between the North

and the South that was indeed to have grave repercussions for the political future of the Sudan. The purpose of these impositions was to divide the Arab Islamic North from the African South, where the Ngok Dinka were allocated to the South, and so insulating the Ngok from Northern Sudanese Islamic and Arab influence (Beswick, 1998:157, Holt and Daly, 2010:96). This policy did much to give rise to a separate Southern Sudanese identity among Ngok Dinka and played a large part in the emergence of Abyei's particular problems. This created a paradoxical situation for Abyei since it was affiliated to the North since 1905 and yet was treated as part of the South that was being insulated from the North.

Abyei and the independence of Sudan

Already by the end of the 1920s, the status of the Ngok Dinka had become a concern for the British colonial administration. Over the next decade, the British administration attempted to return the administration of Abyei back to Bahr el Ghazal Province in the South. Chief Kuol Arob rejected this administrative relocation, despite the urgings for acceptance from the other Dinka chiefs (Deng, 1986). Chief Kuol explained to them privately that if the Ngok were to join the Bahr el Ghazal, he feared that the Arabs, whom he described as 'thieves', would try to seize their territory (Johnson, 2002). Another explanation for his obstinacy is that Chief Kuol Arob might have opted to remain in Kordofan also because he wanted to consolidate his political power and preserve his position as Paramount Chief of the Ngok Dinka (Beswick, 1998:1158).

However, after the decision to remain in Kordofan, Chief Kuol Arob became politically isolated, and his leadership was further weakened when the British colonial rule placed Twich Dinka and Ruweng Dinka under the jurisdiction of Southern Sudan. Chief Kuol Arob then attempted to secure his son Deng Abot as his successor, but failed. Deng Abot was unwilling to ally with the Missiriya (Beswick, 1998:159). Instead, one of Chief Kuol's other sons, Deng Majok, staged a political coup in 1942, and the British administration—supported by the Missiriya Chief Babo Nimir, who wielded considerable influence on the British administrators, —promoted him as the Paramount Chief of the Ngok. This reinforced the pro-North stance of Deng Majok and the anti-North posting of Deng Abot. Once imposed, Deng Majok emerged as a shrewd and powerful leader. It is during his period that the Ngok were introduced to a cash economy, a modern market system and Western education. Deng Majok even encouraged his own children and those of other Ngok Dinka sub-chiefs to go to school (Deng, 1986:130). By marrying some 200 wives, Deng Majok consolidated his leadership among the Ngok. Chief Deng Majok

also maintained close relations with the Missiriya, since the two groups shared a position of apparent political parity (Ibid). Under his leadership, relations with the Missiriya and British administration improved considerably and the Ngok enjoyed a certain degree of political and economic stability.

The 1930s and 1940s witnessed the rapid growth of the Sudanese nationalist movement and the first steps towards Sudan's independence. During self-government negotiations in the early 1950s, the unique status of the Ngok Dinka was recognized. In 1951, the colonial administration again offered the Ngok the opportunity to move to Bahr el Ghazal (Government of Sudan, 1951). At this time, the British were concerned that the interests of the Ngok would not be fairly represented within the government structures in northern Sudan. A meeting held in Abyei on 7 March 1951 resolved that 'the best future for the Ngok Dinka lay in Bahr el Ghazal Province'. But according to the official British report on the meeting, the leaders disagreed about the future of their area (Government of Sudan, 1955). Some of the Ngok leaders, notably Deng Majok, were against shifting to the administration of Bahr el Ghazal since they believed that Kordofan—as a province in Northern Sudan—would be better administered and better funded than that of Bahr el Ghazal in Southern Sudan (Deng, 1986). The detailed account of the meeting reveals that despite the fact that most of these sub-chiefs were appointees of Chief Deng Majok, almost all of them voted in favour of Ngok transfer to the Bahr el Ghazal. The only exceptions were Chief Deng Majok himself and the chiefs of the two subsections of Abyor and Diil (Ibid). When Chief Deng Majok realized he was in a minority, he played for time, arguing for more consultation and further study. The colonial administration gave him time after the meeting in 1951 to visit other districts in Bahr el Ghazal such as Wau, Aweil, Gogrial and Tonj before taking their final decision about the status of Abyei (Deng, 1986:225).

Following the March 1951 meeting, Chief Deng Majok energetically conducted a series of consultations with all chiefs and elders of the nine subsections of the Ngok, chiefs of the Bahr el Ghazal province, and sheikhs and elders of the Missiriya (Deng, 1986: 224-26). These consultations, however, continued to produce mixed results. Most chiefs of the Ngok subsections rejected the proposal to move, and only the four chiefs of Abyor, Anyiel, Diil and Mannyuar accepted it (Deng, 1986). It is apparent that the position of Chief Deng Majok and others not to join the South was based, among other factors, on the fact that they did not want to move there without their lands north of Kiir River. (There was a misunderstanding that what was required was a physical move to the South.) Consequently, Chief Deng Majok, like his father, rejected the transfer proposal: 'should we abandon this land with all its

blessings', he is reported to have said, 'our descendants will one day blame us' (Deng, 1986:227).

In addition to these administrative concerns, Chief Deng Majok had personal reasons for remaining in Kordofan: in the Bahr el Ghazal, as one Dinka chief among many, he believed his status would be lowered. Moreover, his younger brother and rival, Deng Abot, was a strong supporter of the transfer proposal. Because of this, some observers suspected that Chief Deng Majok feared that if the transfer took place, Deng Abot would replace him as Paramount Chief. Some educated Ngok continued their support of Chief Deng Majok because, with growing resistance against British rule among Sudan's elites, they feared that the transfer proposal was part of a British plan to divide Sudan along racial lines (Johnson, 2002). Still, a majority of Ngok leaders, chiefs, sub-chiefs and elites favored a return to the South and opposed the decision of Chief Deng Majok to remain in the North: They feared the fate of the Ngok under the new administration led by Arab and Muslim rulers (Deng, 1986:223-8).

Nevertheless, the Ngok, under the influence of their Chief Deng Majok, decided in 1951 to join the Missiriya District Council instead of the Dinka Gogrial Council in the Bahr el Ghazal, thus remaining allied with the South, with one reservation:

"During the year the Ngok Dinka decided to amalgamate with Missiriya district council and not with the Dinka Gogrial Council in Bahr el Ghazal. They have reserved the right to withdraw from Missiriya Council after five (5) years." (Government of Sudan, 1955:158).

In 1954, as the colonial administration was about to end, other groups among the Ngok at Abyei, representing a younger political constituency, sent representatives to Fulla in Kordofan. They wanted to discuss the exercise of the right to withdraw from the Missiriya Council and to be amalgamated with the Dinka Gogrial Council in the Bahr el- Ghazal. Instead, they were arrested and accused of advocating separatism (Kuol, 2013a). Dr. John Garang recounted this history when he addressed the people of Abyei in 2004, recognizing that the struggle of the people of Abyei had begun in 1954, several months before the Torit mutiny in 1955, which is often cited as the beginning of the first civil war in Sudan (Sudan Mirror, 2007).

Abyei and the first civil war:

In December 1955, Sudan's last British Governor General, Sir Alexander Knox Helm, departed, and on 1 January 1956, Sudan became independent. But even before that the Southern Sudanese, including the Ngok, were subjected to discriminatory government policies (Gurdon, 1984). Well-established religious,

cultural and educational norms were eroded during the years of Sudanization (1954–1955) prior to independence. Then, from January 1956, according to Alier, a number of further steps were taken to Islamize and Arabize cultural life in the entire country, angering southerners everywhere, including those in the Abyei area (Alier, 1992).

In Abyei in this period, primary schools that were run as part of the education system of Bahr el Ghazal changed to follow the Northern education system. All teachers were transferred to Bahr el Ghazal and were replaced by teachers from the North. The new northern teachers insisted on replacing pupils' Ngok Dinka names with Arabic names. According to Johnson, pro-South chiefs sent their sons to Bahr el Ghazal for schooling, while those who were against the transfer of Abyei to the South, such as Chief Deng Majok, took their children to Kordofan; even those already studying in the South, such as Francis Mading Deng and Zacharia Bol Deng, were taken out of Rumbek Secondary School and sent to Kordofan (Johnson, 2002).

Civil servants and teachers working in Abyei, such as Lino Wuor Abyei and Louis Nyok Kuol Arop, were all transferred to the Bahr el Ghazal. These were among wider developments in the South that cumulatively eventually gave rise to the mutiny of the Torit garrison in Equatoria province in 1955. The Commission of Inquiry's Report revealed that among the causes of the 1955 disturbances were injustices perpetrated against the South (Government of Sudan, 1956). At least one Ngok Dinka, Dau Deng Kueth, is reported to have taken part in Torit Mutiny in 1955. Shortly after Torit, in 1957, the youth and students of Abyei organized themselves into a political movement (Kuol, 2013b). This was headed by Bona Bulabek Kuol and Angelo Ajing Jipuur, who became part of the first generation of Abyei to join the Southern political movement (Johnson, 2002).

In 1956, the British administration that had supported the leadership of Chief Deng Majok left, weakening the centralized political structure of the Ngok Dinka. In the absence of British administration, clan rivalries quickly emerged within and among different subsections of the Ngok. The subsection of Mannywar (Dhiendior), whose population was greater than the ruling subsection of Abior (Pajok), forged an alliance within the Northern government to change the balance of power and to end the old system of tribal rule (Deng, 1986:23-4, 43-5).

With the end of the colonial administration, the conflict between the Missiriya and the Ngok intensified. A number of raids by the Missiriya took place, condoned by the new government of Sudan. Hostilities between the Ngok and Missiriya reached a climax in 1965, when the Ngok attacked the Missiriya during their annual dry season migration southward. This was in

retaliation for a brutal insult to a fellow Dinka in Awiel who was killed, his arms amputated and used by Arab nomads to beat their drums. The cycle of violence continued later in 1965, when more than 200 Southern Sudanese, including Ngok Dinka, were burnt alive in the presence of government officials and the nazir of the Missiriya in the towns of Muglad and Babanusa. These atrocities escalated the level of local conflict, merging into the larger North–South war (Deng, 1986:238).

As his strategy had been to defend his people by forging good relations with Missiriya and by relying on that in his refusal to move in his administration to the South, Chief Deng Majok felt betrayed by the Missiriya raids. He now regretted his decision to remain in the North, becoming openly hostile towards his northern neighbors (Ibid). Rather than winning the confidence of the Ngok people as the only non-Muslim and Dinka who were under the administration in Northern Sudan, the new North-dominated government instead pushed the Ngok people away from Sudanese nationalism and towards the cause of Southern Sudan and separatism. The tension between the Ngok Dinka and their Missiriya neighbors was of course exacerbated by the intensifying north–south civil war, in which the Ngok Dinka eventually joined their kith and kin in the Southern liberation struggle (Deng, 2009). Chief Deng Majok died in 1969, to be succeeded by his son Monyyak Deng. This marked the end of any centralized political structure among the Ngok Dinka (Beswick, 1998:162).

When the Sudan African National Union (SANU) and its military wing, the Anya- Nya, organized themselves for rebellion in 1963, the youth of Abyei followed suit in 1964 to wage an insurgency in the Abyei Area under the Anya-Nya umbrella (Kuol, 2013a, Rolandsen, 2011). The political leadership of Abyei's Anya-Nya unit included Arop Deng, Osman Kooc Aguer, Justin Deng Biong and John Maluil, and the military wing was under the command of Dodol Nyang and Ireneo Biong Bol as political commissar (Kuol, 2013c). These local units posed a real threat to the authorities in Abyei, managing to recruit a large number of youths who were sent to the Anya-Nya headquarters in Congo for further military training (Kuol, 2013d).

These youth activists from Abyei then played a prominent role in the evolution of the Anya-Nya rebellion. Dominic Kuol Arop was among the first policemen from Abyei who defected from Raja, in March 1963, joined the Anya-Nya in Congo and subsequently became a military trainer (Ibid). He was one of three officers who accompanied Captain Bernardino Mau Juol, when SANU sent him to launch military operations in the Bahr el- Ghazal. They attacked Wau in January 1964. This sent a clear signal of the rebellion throughout Southern Sudan, and marked the beginning of the serious military campaign in Bahr el Ghazal province (Alier, 1992:40). After the attack on Wau, Dominic

Kuol became deputy commander of Division 5 of the Anya-Nya Army in Abyei and Gogrial. He went on to become commander of the same division during 1965–1967 (Kuol, 2013d). Besides Dominic Kuol, and two students at Rumbek Secondary School, Akonon Mithiang and Ceasar Ayok Deng-Abot, joined the Anya-Nya in 1964, thus becoming the first educated youth from Abyei to join the southern rebellion (Kuol, 2013b). Akonon Mithiang, having excelled as a cadet, became among the first trainers of the Anya-Nya in Congo. He later joined the six-man command council of the military wing of the Bahr el Ghazal Anya-Nya Movement formed in 1966. Akonon became a commander of Gogrial and Tonj, Lakes and Northern Bahr el Ghazal, where he famously succeeded in cutting the rail link between north and south (Arop, 2012). Caesar Ayok Deng-Abot was among the first three officers selected for training in France (Kuol, 2013d). He and Akonon Mithiang were the most senior officers of the Anya-Nya from Abyei killed in action during the first civil war.

In 1970, the government of Sudan killed, amongst others, Moyyak Deng, chief of the Ngok, who was accused of collaborating with the Anya-Nya. Despite this, the flow of new recruits from Abyei to the Anya-Nya Liberation Army headquarters continued (Johnson, 2002). It was during 1969 and 1970 that the different Anya-Nya groups of Southern Sudan became more coordinated and increasingly identified under a central political leadership under the umbrella of South Sudan Liberation Movement (SSLM). With the assassination of Ngok Paramount Chief Monyyak (Moyak) Deng, the national government expedited the process of dismantling the centralized political structure of the Ngok Dinka.

Abyei and the Addis Ababa Agreement (1972)

In May 1969, Colonel Jaafar Nimeiri seized power in Sudan through a coup d'état. Ironically, the coup opened the way for the resolution of the conflict in Sudan by political rather than military means. On 9 June 1969, the new regime issued a 'Declaration of Regional Autonomy for the southern Provinces', outlining plans for regional self-governance. This paved the way for the SSLM to negotiate. Over the course of two weeks of talks between Nimeiri's government and the SSLM, the Addis Ababa Agreement was concluded and signed on 27 February 1972. The issue of Abyei was discussed at length in Addis Ababa. The SSLM maintained that Abyei should be incorporated into the Southern region (Alier, 1992:117-8, Johnson, 2011:44). On the other hand, the Sudanese government's delegation wanted the current status of Abyei and other border areas to be maintained, on the grounds that the SSLM was not entitled to speak on behalf of all the people of Abyei. The deadlock was broken

and a compromise was enshrined in the definition of the 'Southern Provinces of Sudan' as:

"the Provinces of Bahr El Ghazal, Equatoria and Upper Nile in accordance with their boundaries as they stood on January 1, 1956, and any other areas that were culturally and geographically a part of Southern Complex as may be decided by a referendum" (Government of Sudan, 1972).

In this context, the Addis Ababa Agreement thus made special provision for the people of Abyei and other border areas, with the right to choose through referendum whether to remain in the North or to join the South. However, the Addis Ababa Accord did not specify which areas were 'culturally and geographically' part of the 'Southern complex' nor did it provide a mechanism for identifying such areas, which might have provided grounds for challenging the application of that provision to Abyei. Nonetheless, the clear intention of the Parties to the Addis Ababa Agreement was that provision should encompass Abyei and other border areas as affiliated to the 'Southern Region'.

After the Addis Ababa Agreement, Arab nomads found themselves dealing with southern administrators, southern police and even southern soldiers. The effects of this were compounded by the abolition of native administration in the North in 1971 but its continuation in the Southern region, including in Abyei as a cultural extension of the South. In response to this new reality in the South, President Nimeiri announced the formation of the *murahleen* (mobile forces) which later became the popular defence force (*al-difa' al-shabi*). These were paramilitary cattle guards who travelled with Arab nomads during the dry season to prevent fighting between them and the Dinka. The idea of *murahleen* was a response to the emergence of Southern Sudanese law enforcement forces in areas accessed by Arab pastoralists. In December 1972, shortly after the Addis Ababa Agreement, Nimeiri visited Abyei. During this visit, the Ngok demanded the holding of a referendum in Abyei as outlined in the Agreement, the formation of local administration, and the right to have their own armed guards. President Nimeiri was unhappy with the way he was received by the angry Ngok. He declared the abolition of the native administration, and dismissed the Paramount Chief. Nevertheless, pursuant to a proposal which had been presented to him for the administration and development of the area as a means of addressing the grievances of the people and as a symbol of the unity of Sudan, the President declared a special administrative status for Abyei, directly managed under the presidency. But he dismissed the demand for a referendum and the request for armed guards (Kuol, 2013e), arguing that he had not assumed power to divide the country. This was in effect a backtracking on the Addis Ababa Agreement provision on Abyei.

After his visit to Abyei, Nimeiri acted on his declared policy and issued a presidential order granting Abyei special status under direct supervision of the presidency. Dr Francis Mading Deng, the son of Chief Deng Majok and Minister of State in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs at that time, had proposed and propounded a project for the administration and development of Abyei, for which he had secured funding from USAID. This was meant to provide the Ngok Dinka with 'peace dividends' and a 'mini' version of the autonomous status of the South, to support Abyei's special status as a microcosm of Sudan. The Missiriya resented both the Ngok's winning of the right to administer their sub-district and the US-funded development project. In 1977, the murahleen began attacking the Ngok. Trucks travelling with Ngok passengers from Muglad, the main Missiriya town, to Abyei were intercepted and looted, and travelers were murdered. In 1977, Mark Majak Abiem, a Ph.D. student of the University of London who was going to Abyei for fieldwork, was among some 80 Ngok killed in a single incident (Arop, 2006:63-6). In 1980, Missiriya tribesmen and murahleen forces jointly staged a massive attack on Ngok villages, burning houses, destroying crops, looting livestock, killing at random and forcing large numbers of people to flee (Deng, 1995).

After the 1977 incidents, First Vice President Al-Baqr Ahmed went to Abyei accompanied by Dr. Francis Mading Deng. Upon his arrival, he was confronted with extreme anger by the Ngok Dinka who accused the government of supporting the Missiriya, an allegation the Vice President emphatically and angrily refuted. Nevertheless, he showed sympathy for the cause of the Ngok for which he promised to seek solution. Baqr's delegation also went to Muglad and met with the Missiriya to promote peace and reconciliation. But shortly after his return to Khartoum, he was dismissed. His successor, Abul Gassim Mohamed Ibrahim, who was also sympathetic with the cause of the Ngok Dinka, did not last long in that position. President Nimeiri was uncompromisingly opposed to the holding of the referendum. He argued that even if Article 3(iii) of the Addis Ababa Agreement was intended to include Abyei, the word 'may' in its language gave the government the liberty to conduct or not to conduct a referendum.

The people of Abyei nonetheless sent numerous petitions between 1973 and 1982 requesting that the referendum be conducted (Wakoson, 1993). All these overtures were ignored. No referendum was ever conducted in Abyei. Instead, the government of Sudan focused on implementing the project for the development of Abyei's self-administration under presidential oversight. Northern administrators were initially transferred to Abyei, but Francis Deng persuaded the government that the administration of the area be managed by the people of the area themselves. Justin Deng Aguer, a son of Abyei, was brought from Juba and appointed as assistant commissioner under the direct

supervision of the national minister of local government. At the demand of the people of Abyei, Francis Deng persuaded the government to reinstate the native administration system which Nimeiri had abolished, reappoint the Paramount Chief, and recruit the police from among the Ngok. Teachers who had left the Abyei Area after 'Sudanisation' were brought back from Bahr el Ghazal, and ex-Any-Nya from Abyei were incorporated into the local police.

Abyei and the eruption of the second civil war

Despite these limited reforms, the issue of Abyei's statelessness not only played a critical role in the deteriorating relations between the South and North, but also contributed significantly to the internal political dynamics of the South. Dissatisfaction with Abel Alier, the first president of the Southern Regional Government, over his handling of the Abyei issue led Ngok intellectuals in Juba to join the 'wind of change' movement in 1977. This targeted the Abel Alier faction and endorsed the presidency of the former Anya-Nya leader, Joseph Lagu, in the hope that he would challenge President Nimeiri on the issue of Abyei. In the elections of 1978, Dr Zacharia Bol Deng, a son of Chief Deng Majok and past chairman of the Abyei Liberation Front (ALF), won a seat in the Southern Sudan Regional Assembly and was then appointed its Deputy Speaker (Arop, 2012). The assembly passed a resolution to annex Abyei to the territory of southern region, but Joseph Lagu, the newly elected president, failed to submit the resolution to President Nimeiri.

In the midst of a power struggle in the South, President Lagu was subjected to impeachment in 1980 for allegedly betraying the cause of the South and undermining the autonomy of the region. In return, the Speaker of the Assembly, Deputy Speaker, and Controller of the Assembly, as well as some ministers, were all dismissed. This political infighting gave Nimeiri a pretext in February 1980 to dissolve the Regional Assembly, dismiss the government of Joseph Lagu, and form a High Technical Committee chaired by Abel Alier, now Vice President of the Republic of Sudan, to supervise regional elections. In the elections in April 1980, the intellectuals of Abyei, headed by Dr Zacharia Bol, who had again secured a seat in the Regional Assembly, supported Abel Alier for the presidency of the regional government. They understandably felt betrayed by Joseph Lagu, who had failed to raise the issue of Abyei with the central government as he had promised when standing for the regional presidency in 1978. Abel Alier was overwhelmingly elected, and he formed a government that included Dr Zacharia Bol as minister of health, the first Ngok Dinka of Abyei to become a minister in the regional government.

The newly elected Regional Assembly, clearly influenced by Dr Zacharia Bol, again passed a resolution to annex Abyei to the territory of the South and asked the new regional president to forward this resolution to the central government for implementation. Abel Alier was on a firmer ground this time. But President Nimeiri again responded by dismissing the regional government and regional assembly in October 1981, appointing Gissmallah Abdalla Rassas to oversee the process of dismantling the Addis Ababa Agreement altogether and 're-dividing' the South into three 'regions'.

Despite the fact that the Addis Ababa Agreement produced a decade of relative peace, its provisions were eventually largely abrogated by president Nimeiri on 5 June 1983 (Gurdon, 1984). Among the factors that contributed to the failure of the agreement were a lack of funding from the central government, the central government's actions upon the discovery of oil in the South, the re-division of the Southern region, and the failure of the Government to honor the provision that Abyei and other border areas were entitled to referenda (Alier, 1992). The imposition of the Sharia law on all of Sudan, including the Southern region, in September 1983 angered the Southerners further.

The ALF was founded in 1978 by Deng Alor, James Ajing, Arop Madut, Edward Lino and Col Deng Alak and under the chairmanship of Dr Zacharia Bol Deng (Arop, 2012). Its main objectives included building a united leadership for Abyei, working towards the holding of a referendum, mobilizing funds and resources to buy guns for Abyei's self-defence, and influencing the leadership of the South to support the cause of Abyei (Kuol, 2013f). The formation of the ALF proceeded from a meeting of Abyei intellectuals in Juba with Abel Alier, then president of the South, after the devastation of the Abyei Area in 1977. At this meeting, he had made it clear that (in his opinion) the issue of Abyei was insoluble and that, if they were not careful, the people of Abyei would end up like the Palestinians; joining Kordofan was preferable to annihilation (Kuol, 2013g). According to Arop Madut, a Ngok Dinka journalist and historian, this was why the intellectuals formed the ALF and worked with the 'wind of change' movement to bring down Abel Alier. The ALF set about acquiring arms for the people of Abyei and training them to defend themselves from the Missiriya and murahleen.

In 1981, a group of Ngok Dinka intellectuals and chiefs were having an evening social gathering in Abyei town when they were attacked by government forces. A primary school teacher was killed, and a number of intellectuals, senior officials and the Ngok Paramount Chief Kuol Deng fled to the Bahr el Ghazal. After this incident, the Abyei Anya-Nya II was organized by Miokol Deng, with support from the ALF. He led a force out of Abyei to the Twich area and, together with the Malual Dinka, Anya-Nya II began intensive local training.

The forces of Abyei Anya-Nya II were involved in the attack on Ariath, a station along the railway linking north and south, in early 1983, in an incident that shocked Khartoum. Miokol was assisted in his work by many students, including Pieng Deng, an engineering student at the University of Khartoum, and by Bagat Agwek, a soldier stationed in Juba who managed to smuggle guns into Abyei. In early 1983, Miokol and Bagat played a significant role in uniting various Anya-Nya II groups in the Bahr el Ghazal. It has been estimated that Miokol Deng brought some 10,000 fighters to the nascent SPLM/Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) at its headquarters at Bilpam; many young people from Abyei died on the way. Dr John Garang, in his address to the people of Abyei in 2004, recognized the important role played by Miokol Deng (Sudan Mirror, 2007).

Besides the Anya-Nya II organized by Miokol in Abyei and the Bahr el Ghazal, groups of students and intellectuals from the Abyei Area went to Bilpam in early 1982. Kuol Anyel, the son of Anyel Kuol, who had been assassinated by government forces in 1969 in Abyei town, was among the first group to go. The arrests of Abyei leaders in early 1983 induced even more Abyei students and intellectuals to join the Anya-Nya II. After the Bor mutiny, that triggered the rebellion in May 1983, students from the University of Khartoum and University of Juba along with some leading Abyei intellectuals in the South and Khartoum went to Ethiopia and joined the SPLA. Among those Abyei intellectuals were Deng Alor, a diplomat in the ministry of foreign affairs in Khartoum, Chol Deng, a senior official in the southern regional government, and Mading Deng-Abot, a new graduate of Juba University.

Following these developments in the Abyei Area and formation of Abyei Anya-Nya II, the government of Sudan arrested a number of Abyei intellectuals and senior Ngok officials in the Southern Regional Government in early 1983 (Deng, 1995). About 50 Abyei intellectuals, chiefs and leaders, including their leader Dr. Zacharia, were rounded up in Malakal, Wau, Juba, Khartoum and Abyei. A second wave of arrests of Ngok Dinka intellectuals took place in 1984, which encouraged another wave of Abyei citizens to join the SPLA. These and other developments ultimately led to substantial Ngok Dinka participation in the membership of the SPLA (Mawson, 1991).

Conclusion

The people of Abyei managed to exist through the turmoil of the Turkiyya slave-raids, the Mahdiyya's chaos, and subsequent decades of misrule by the post-independence northern elite regimes. Yet, the question of the future status of Abyei remains a deeply contested issue between Sudan and the independent

South Sudan. The connection between the political violence in Abyei and the eruption of the two civil wars in the Sudan is sparsely documented, but this history reveals the character of the Abyei problem.

This chapter provides an analysis of the role of people of Abyei in shaping the identity and defining the character of the independent state of South Sudan. It analyzes the political violence in the emergence of the dispute around the status of Abyei. It charts the evolution of the problem chronologically, first situating the history of the Ngok Dinka people of Abyei, and then mapping the history of violence through the independence period, the first civil war, the early 1970s and the failure of the Addis Ababa Agreement, and finally the second civil war in the 1980s. Political violence in Abyei became central to the large-scale contestation between the South and the North in Sudan.

The transfer of the Ngok Dinka and their lands to the administration of Kordofan in 1905 marked the genesis of the official debates concerning Abyei's status. As a political unit, Abyei has been shaped by power struggles among the Ngok Dinka, by their relations with Missiriya, and by the larger dynamics of the conflict between Khartoum and Southern Sudan. The decision of the leaders of Ngok Dinka in the twentieth century to refuse re-transfer to the South indirectly helped to protect their area until the delimitation by the Permanent Court of Arbitration in 2009, which included their areas north of K̄ir River.

As this chapter has demonstrated, the Abyei issue gained political significance not only because of repressive violence from the government or agents acting on behalf of the government, but also through the people of Abyei's shared experience of struggle against oppression. The relations between Ngok Dinka and Missiriya provided opportunities as well as challenges, which shaped the course of political violence in the Abyei Area. Although the Missiriya has perpetrated violence in Abyei Area at the behest of various regimes that have ruled Sudan, relationships between the two have been more complex than this suggests: The leaders of the Ngok Dinka adopted defensive strategies as well as forged good relations with Missiriya. Having good relations with Missiriya helped the Ngok Dinka to survive the turmoil of the Turkiyya slave raids, the Mahdiyya's chaos, the Anglo-Egyptian's early tolerance of slave raids, and subsequent decades of misrule by the post-independence Northern elite regimes. The violent and acrimonious process of changing powers between different regimes in Sudan affected the relations of Ngok Dinka and their Missiriya neighbors, often in favor of the Missiriya. But the Ngok Dinka and their leaders managed also to maintain good relations with the succession of regimes that governed Sudan, at least until the first civil war reached Abyei in the 1960s.

As the new Republic of South Sudan and Republic of Sudan have struggled to normalize their relations, the history of the Abyei dispute suggests that peaceful relations between the two countries may depend in part on a resolution of the Abyei issue. The active participation of the people of Abyei in the first civil war contributed towards shaping the definition of the territory of the South. The eruption of political violence in Abyei in the early 1980s contributed also to the initial outbreak of the second civil war that resulted in the South's achieving its ultimate political goal of independence, while the people of Abyei obtained clearer terms for the conduct of a referendum to decide its final status.

Through international arbitration process, the land of the people of Abyei has been secured, but the final political status of Abyei is not yet resolved. The outcome of the Abyei referendum in October 2013 leaves South Sudan, Sudan, the African Union and the international community with only two options: either to accept the outcome of people's referendum that overwhelmingly favored inclusion of Abyei to the territory of South Sudan, or to conduct a new, but redundant, referendum on the basis of the African Union's proposal. Until this can be resolved, Abyei will continue to be the scene of bitter disputation.

Part Two:

Experiences in the Liberation Struggle



Chapter Three:

A Diplomat Turned Warrior

Deng Alor Kuol

I was born in 1952 in Maker and went to primary school in Muglad, intermediate school in El Fula, secondary school in Medani, university in Cairo University of Egypt, and did postgraduate studies in the University of London Greenwich. I first became conscious of the southern liberation struggle during my early schooling. It dates back to the early days of the conflict between the Ngok of Abyei and the Missiriya Humr. When I was a very young boy in intermediate school in Fula, my mother was killed in Muglad and that triggered in me this feeling of consciousness that we had a problem. Maybe we need to contribute to the solution of that problem. But when I went to secondary school in Medani, I developed more interest in politics and the struggle. In the university in Egypt, we started an underground movement of which we elected James Wani Igga as our leader.

After we graduated, we continued our work. I came and worked in Juba for one year in the Ministry of Information, in 1980 and 81. James Wani was in Khartoum. He worked in a National Insurance Company which had a branch in Juba. I wanted to join Foreign Affairs, so I sat for the exam. Wani became the head of the insurance company's Juba branch and we used to meet in his house in Kator with a number of young graduates to discuss issues and plan some political activities. We assigned Wani the role of contacting the South Sudanese officers who were then in the Sudanese army. Our idea was to join Anyanya

II which had already been started in Upper Nile and in Bahr el Ghazal by late Miokol Deng Majok.

In 1982, while working in Juba, our small organization working for Abyei included Uncle Deng Bar and others. We decided to go to Abyei and first talked to Peter Gatkuoth who informed Abel Alier that we wanted to carry out enlightenment of the people of Abyei, to connect to the wider struggle. Gatkuoth was Deputy President and he gave us money and a vehicle. Edward Lino, Luis Kuol Arop and myself first went to Yambio to get the vehicle. The late Justin Deng Aguer was in Maridi serving as District Commissioner. We spent a night with him and then returned to Juba. The Ngok in Juba organized a team that should go with us to Abyei, including Luis Deng Monytoc, Sheikh Mohamed and Monywir (Uncle Arop Bagat knows the names very well). We went to Wau with one car and after meeting with the Commissioner, he gave us another car and we proceeded to Abyei. When we were in Abyei, we met with the police, the administration and then our people. Miokol was the Secretary in Abyei of Sudan Socialist Union (SSU). We put up in the house of late Dr. Kuol Arop Kuol, who was with the Harvard Project.

In one of the meetings with the Northern Sudanese police, there was someone called Ahmed who was notorious. There was a police battalion in Abyei. Ahmed and the captain of police decided to put us under house arrest. We were in the house of Kuol and, at the same time, Nimieri had sent the team, including Dr. Francis, to carry out some consultations in Abyei. When the team came, they found that a number of Abyei leaders in the South, including Edward Lino, Monywir Deng Monytoc, myself and others were under arrest. They also found that Miokol had tried to intervene, being the SSU Secretary in the area, but the police officers would not listen; and so, they deployed all around. The situation had escalated and become serious. There was an army Lieutenant from Yirol who had a company stationed in Abiemnhom. When he heard about our situation, he visited Abyei several times in a very aggressive manner. He almost created a fight because in Abyei there was already a battalion. There was another Nuer officer in Aweil or Twitch, commanding the police who would also come to Abyei frequently. Both were demanding our release, so tensions were high.

Miokol told us through somebody (as he had a way of passing information) that the team included Dr. Francis, Majier and James Lual who was a Member of Parliament and a great friend of Edward Lino. Attempts were made by Miokol to inform that team of what was happening. Later in the evening, while we were playing cards, Miokol talked to Dr. Francis, Majier and James Lual to inform them exactly of our circumstance. Dr. Francis was enraged, but because he was a brother and from the area, people were trying to calm him down.

Instead, James took over and put lots of pressure on the authorities. In the end, they agreed to invite one person from among us to address them, and all of us agreed it should be Edward. So, Edward went and talked, and when he came back, an agreement was made that we should be released.

We got the message from Edward that we were told to leave the following day back to Juba. We had two cars and decided to go through Mayen Abun which is where we had come from. Surprisingly, around four o'clock in the morning, when we were playing cards to keep us awake until our scheduled departure at 5:30 am, Matet Ayom came wearing a black jacket as it was cold. The security had been withdrawn and Matet easily found us as we sat playing cards. He said he wanted to talk to Uncle Monywir Deng Monyotoc. He said "Monywir, all of you brothers, leave now and don't go the way you came because, immediately after Edward left and the announcement was made that you should leave tomorrow, a force was sent along the road to Mayen Abun at the Akech Nhial crossing point. That is where you will be ambushed. Take any route, but do not go through this way." He never talked to anyone beyond that; he simply greeted people and said, "See you tomorrow," without disclosing his mission. It took us 10-15 minutes to analyze the situation and ascertain whether he was sincere. Since he did not prescribe a route, we figured out that he must be sincere. So, we agreed that we should leave immediately. Our things were already packed into the two vehicles. After 10 mins, we left.

We arrived at Abiemnhom. When the security forces stationed there saw the cars, they immediately took cover. Lieutenant Mariik from Yirol said, "You cross the bridge..." He then brought chairs and joined us on the other side of the river. As he sat with us, he wasted no time. He said, "They might follow you..." Still, we took tea with him. Soon, we saw dust coming on the road from Abyei. He quickly returned across the river and stopped the convoy. He said, "This is South Sudan; if you continue, we will fight." They were Northern Sudanese soldiers in three trucks. They turned back. These events had an impact on people like Miokol who later rebelled.

A Nuer sergeant major was deployed in Mayen Abun. Although his force was small, he was from Anya-Nya, and it was he who later received Miokol when he started the whole struggle of Anya-Nya II in Bahr el Ghazal and became the overall commander. Miokol had realized that the environment around was conducive for rebellion and there were friendly forces. People would come with their money to buy the guns and their role was to facilitate the distribution of the guns. Some guns came from Darfur. From Miokol's rebellion, Anya-Nya II started to grow, and we did our part to support it from Juba.

Then the war started in Bor. I had been in touch with Edward Lino who was in Khartoum also deeply involved in political activities there. So, we used to

share information. Edward advised that I join John Garang rather than Anya-Nya II. Although Edward was also very active like us, he was not part of our small organization. He was with a number of progressive South Sudanese in Khartoum, but he knew John Garang, and I listened to his advice. So, I took my annual leave.

I put up in a house that was occupied by people from Abyei. Chol Deng Alak was also there. Kuol Deng Abot (Kuol bi Ting) was in Malakal. Chol and I agreed to go to see him there. Chol went ahead of me; but the security situation became bad and they had to leave. I left later and went to Malakal with Yusuf Deng Gai, who was the commander of the wildlife services, and put up in his house for 9 days. I found that many young people had gone head. So, I did the same. I walked for nine days to join John Garang who was already in Itang in Ethiopia.

It was 1983. I left with six other young men from Bor. We started walking at 10 am with small bags. I don't know why the security didn't suspect that we were joining the rebels. We went to the home of Andrew Ayuel, in Baitet, where we found the son of a police sergeant who was commanding a small police force. We put up in his house and he gave us a canoe to cross the river. On the other side there was a small village, called Pan Dengdit, where a spiritual leader of Ngok of Lual Yak dwelled. When he found that I was from Abyei, he said, "You are not leaving." We spent 7 days with him. He slaughtered cattle for us, and presided over two ceremonies. On each occasion, I entered his big cattle byre. It was night and so dark that I could see nothing. He would pray. I remember how he spoke of the linkage between Ngok of Lual Yak and our Uncle Chief Kuol Arop.

While there, we were joined by one man from Anya-Nya II, who was a Dinka. He moved with us. He was the only person among us who was armed. Of course, the territory was filled with hostilities. Initially, however, our travel was without any serious incident. When we moved from a place called Abuong, we went straight without caution, and realized that Anya-Nya II in Upper Nile was very organized; in every village, there was a committee, through which you would be received, fed, and taken to the next village.

We then got lost and went through the hills behind Itang. It was two days' walk to Bilpam, the Headquarters of the rebel army. Garang had already passed through those same hills and was in Itang, where he was negotiating with Gai Tut and Akuot Atem. Just as we were about to arrive, fighting broke out between the forces of John Garang and those of Gai Tut and Akuot Atem. So, John Garang with Kerebino Kwanyin, William Nyoun, Joseph Oduhu and Majier had to consult upon what to do. John Garang said, "You give me the army and you settle the issue of political leadership." Uncle Oduhu, Majier, and

Gai Tut had each wanted the leadership. When we arrived at a certain small Nuer village, the fighting had just broken out. Those of Akuot Atem had left. Garang was being supported by the Ethiopians, and they carried out maneuvers without directly engaging in combat; however, that intervention was effective because they were organized.

In that small Nuer village, Akuot Atem had left some of his wounded soldiers. We arrived and were received shortly after Akuot had left. Fortunately, we had medicine. Most of my friends and colleagues in Juba were medical doctors. So, the day we were leaving, on a Sunday, I had done a tour, collecting medicine. My friends asked, "Where are you going?" I told them, "To the bush." They laughed saying, "You're not serious." But I was serious and two of them, Dr. Mug Adwok and Dr. Charles, went to the hospital pharmacy, collected medicines and gave them to us. That medicine helped us by buying us some security. We went to a house of somebody in the village and decided to rest. We were all Dinka in a Nuer area at a time when the Nuer were running away from the Dinka in the battle. The owner of the house had five or six huts. What was good was that the Dinka from Upper Nile who were with us all spoke Nuer. So, they spoke with the man and he gave us a hut. Then he asked his wives to make food for us and began chatting with us.

I was the only one who needed an interpreter. A man called Piu told me, "Deng, give them clothing..." Our host was naked. So, we clothed him and gave him medicines. He became very happy. Now, he started giving us information. In the evening, he went immediately and put on his clothes. He said, "Gai Tut left with Akuot Atem and Abdalla Chol yesterday. In that hut, there are soldiers who are wounded. You can see them tomorrow, but do not say you are going to Itang. Say you are going to follow Gai Tut, and find a way to delay or take a different route."

They left at four o'clock and at five o'clock we left. We were also suspicious of the old man who had hosted us. He had said he would show us the way, but we had no way of knowing his plan. He knew we were not with Gai Tut, and he himself was Nuer. Still, we went with him because our best option was to trust him and he had so far given us no reason to lose faith. He walked with us for 5 hours until 10 am. As we walked, the water was steadily rising around our ankles. It was flooding. He stopped and returned, but gave us one last word of advice, "Always keep the hills behind you."

As we walked, the water increased. There was so much water! The old man had also advised us, "Only rest on ant hills (Elevated lands believed to be mounds built, but abandoned by ants)." We only had a certain fruit from the forest called thou met to eat. The situation became serious. The more we walked, the deeper into the swamp we sank. What divides the Anuak and Nuer

is a river that becomes a swamp when it floods. We didn't know. We kept looking for ant hills. Usually, they are found next to a tamarind tree, so that was our signal. Finally, we found one. We had some sheets, and we tied them and hung them between the trees for the young ones to sleep in. The rest of us decided to stay awake the whole night. Usually, ant hills surrounded by water will have snakes which, like us, sought rest away from the water. At six o'clock, we left. As I stepped into the water, it was now at my chest.

The young boys could not swim, but the rest of us knew how. Those of us who knew how to swim helped those that could not cross the river. From 6am to 4pm we were wading in water up to our chins. At a certain point, we had entered the river and could do nothing but to swim. We saw smoke and swam towards it, going slowly and helping the boys. We had to try to rest while swimming in the water, and then go forward again. In the middle of the river, when desperation was quickly descending upon us, we saw two canoes. They were Anuak people from that land. They saw us from a distance and were surprised that we were in the middle of the river. The first canoe came, and we put those young boys in. Three of us remained behind and we continued to swim. The second boat arrived when we had crossed half of the river. The first group had made a big fire on the other side among the Ethiopian Nuer and Ethiopian Anuak who lived on that land. They received us well. They roasted fish and grilled meat. They helped us to dry our clothes and bags. They said, "You should spend two days here; we know you are going to Bilpam." They spoke Anuak, Luo, Nuer and Amharic. We spent two days with them, as they had suggested. Then we walked on, following the river.

When we got to Bilpam, we confronted another crisis. People were running away. We had just crossed a smaller river, and found people running amidst gunfire. They saw us as civilians. They were telling us in Nuer to return. We responded to them in Nuer. We turned back and swam again across that river into Anuak land. We asked at a house for directions to Itang. The owners of the house described how to get there. So, as people were running away from the fighting, we went in the opposite direction and arrived in Itang at 5 pm that evening.

John Garang was there with Kerebino, Chol Deng Alak, and Francis Ngor. William Nyuon was also there. They were all staying in one hut. They had made some beds out of sticks and reeds, and had blankets given by the Ethiopian army. I shared a bed with Chol. Kuol was in the force of Jamus battalion. They were not yet being trained, and there was a specific place for the recruits. Salva was also there in the same compound with Alfred Akuoc in one hut. There was a lake in the middle of the compound.

Then, Dr. John briefed us and we also briefed him about our journey. He also asked me to brief him about what I had learned in Khartoum. Edward Lino had given me a lot of information as he was the most active person there. I explained that the group was small and we were under threat, and the Ethiopian army was also present. Oyai Deng came from Anya-Nya II with 40 soldiers with guns. This was a huge force for us and we celebrated. But people were still under threat and were afraid because the Nuer who numbered in the thousands could have come to attack at any time. The Ethiopians were beginning to plan how to train the Jamus battalion. Garang had come with less than a hundred forces, but they were already well trained and had uniforms so their numbers seemed much greater than they really were.

After two weeks, the real force under Bagat Aguek from Abyei came. They had arms and were trained. He had been operating in the eastern part of Twich area. He was with Miokol Deng Majok, who had started Anya-Nya II in Bahr el Ghazal, but decided to come and join the SPLA; he was cooperating with Anya-Nya II in Bentiu. Gadet Nyankuach was with him and a few Nuer elements. But 600 of the forces were Ngok and 190+ were Twich, including Ring Madut, brother of Bona Malual Madut.

John was the leader at Bilpam, deputized by William Nyoun, followed by Kerebino Kwanyin Bol then Salva Kiir Mayardit. As for Chol Deng Alak, he was known to be an erratic and ambitious person. We were in the same room, in bed, but he would sit outside because there was always water in the hut. Uncle Joseph Oduho would wash his face from the water in the hut, and say, "What difference does it make?" It was then that Dr. John asked Majier to write the first SPLA military legal code. John had gone with Salva to Addis. John had been working on the manifesto as they were walking, and he and Salva decided to have it typed and our Ethiopian friend, Abbera, who is still close to us, did it on his typewriter.

Those who wrote the first legal code included Oduho, Majier, Gai Tut, among others. They had all gone to see Mengistu Haile Mariam who had invited them. Mengistu was interested in Dr. John. But Akuot Atem was the leader. He was a big man, and had been a minister. Garang used to say, "I am only number four, responsible for the army." Garang assigned Salva to make sure the manifesto got typed; and it was actually done by a secretary of Aberra. When it was finished, it was put into a booklet form. When Gai Tut left, they took copies with them and left Garang behind as the leader.

Garang used to say there were four of them who were initially supposed to make a coup based on the early planning of the group. Albino Akol Akol was going to be the leader, followed by Peter Cirillo, and others including Dr.

John Garang and Clement Wani who was a very patriotic officer, known as the Black Fox.

Garang was later wounded by the SPLA. Their plan was to make a coup to take power in South Sudan. They even gave the month of August to take power in Juba. They made their contacts with forces in Torit, Juba, Maridi, Rumbek, Bussere, Malou (Rumbek), and Aweil. This was fully coordinated. The fight in Bor that started the rebellion in 1983, was not planned; it erupted prematurely.

In September and October in 1983, we were organized, and were to go for combined political and military training. The big force of Jamus was to be trained as officers. Taban Deng Gai came with Bagat Aguek whom he had met on the way in Bentiu. Taban was a teacher at that time. Paul Gador from Bentiu also joined and was later killed. He was a very good young man. Towards October, Taban, Atem, myself and a number of others were taken for training. Then Garang and Salva sent for General Mesfin, who was a graduate from Sanhurst, one of the most prestigious military academies, like the American West Point, and also had studied law at the University of Addis Ababa. He remained in London when Mengistu fell. The reason for Dr. John calling General Mesfin was to recruit a force of young people who had become Anya-Nya II rebels at the same time as Pieng in 1982. Pagan, Nyakujak and Nakuriang had already left before Pieng and gone to Boma in Jonglei state of Upper Nile. These young men were commanded by Nyakonyan, followed in command by Nyakujak and then Pagan as number three. These were all Anya-Nya II Upper Nile forces.

John said he had heard of all these gentlemen and told Gen Mesfin, "I want to send somebody to them." There was an Ethiopian force on the border. With the help of Mesfin, they picked a person from Itang and took a written message from John Garang and sent it to them. Pagan responded saying that they were ready to come. And Dr. John Garang and Salva and General Mesfin went to get Pagan and his group. This is how they came to join the training in October. It was a three-months vigorous training, both military and political orientation, although it was more political than military because it was a political army. The next three months were spent with Kuol Deng Abot in general training. It was at that time that Chol Deng Alak was arrested, just before the training.

Chol used to drink Ethiopian alcohol called aregi. William Nyuon didn't drink. He also didn't take milk but liked cows. Others were drinking too. Perhaps this is what caused Chol to be a bit careless when he said, "Our force has come from Abyei in great numbers. So, either me or Deng should be in the leadership. And since I came a month before Deng, it should be me." I advised him, "What leadership are you talking about? The Movement is still being formed..." Anyway, that is how the discussion went. We had all been commissioned as captains. Major Nhial was with us. He had been high up in the

police and when he rebelled, he was a police colonel in Bor; he had wanted to be second in command to Garang, but it was decided that it would be wrong because they were both from Bor. So, he considered himself number 5 or 6, but unofficially.

The waters had receded by this time, and we now had fire outside the hut. Chol and I, along with others including Majur Nhial, sat together at night. Rebecca Garang and other women were cooking for us. I remember they were pounding the grain. Around 7 pm, we had been sitting chatting, when I moved to stand at some distance. Majur had also walked off to talk to Alfred Akuac. As I came back to the fire, I saw William Nyuon with a force, pushing Chol and beating him. I came running. William Nyuon said to me, "Stop there!" Chol thought that since he was the only one who had studied in Russia, and was also an avowed socialist, he should be the one to lead. He also based his claims on the grounds that the Ngok contribution of troops early on through Bagat Aguek was huge. However, this was a miscalculation, as his claims provoked the leadership. Now, he was being arrested. Chol had left his sandals as he had been beaten and was barefooted. So, I picked them up and ran after William. He asked me, "What is the problem." I showed him the sandals. He took them and softened a bit, but persisted to march Chol towards his detention. But he allowed him to take his sandals. Two weeks later, we left for training and Chol missed out.

I started to develop a close relationship with Dr. John when I was sent for training. From time to time he would come to see us in Ethiopia. We graduated in January 1984 as officers and were commissioned. When we were commissioned, he briefed us and then called me later and gave me some intensive orientation about the task we were supposed to do in Bahr el Ghazal. He said, "Your Uncle Kawach Makuei is a seasoned officer, but he is difficult. I want you to be tough with Anya-Nya II." He said, "You are a Political Commissar." And he gave me the legal code, which I later distributed. We commanded Jamus battalion. That was the first SPLA trained unit. It was divided into two—Jamus of Upper Nile, under Kerebino. Kawach Makuei from Aweil commanded Jamus for Bahr el Ghazal and was deputized by Bol Ayuelnhom from Twich, who was a veteran of Anyanya 1 and 2. He spoke fluent Lingala and French, but he ultimately refused to come. Captain Elijah Hon and myself were political commissars at the HQ of Kawach, along with Captains Alfred Ajuong and Abun Alier, who became Deputy Chief of Staff. Kuol Deng Abot was a Sergeant in military intelligence and was in charge of security.

We were given a mission to recruit Anya-Nya II into SPLA in two ways, persuasion and, if they refused, the use of force (coercion). But no one refused. When they saw the armament of Jamus, they wanted to go where the arms

were. This is where I met my cousin, Pieng Deng Majok. It was one month's walk from the Ethiopian border to Bahr el Ghazal. We arrived sometime in April 1984. I found Pieng behind as the bulk of our force had gone ahead. I was commanding the movement of ammunitions and also looking after some wounded soldiers. We were 400 in Jamus of Bahr el Ghazal. Jamus of Upper Nile, commanded by Kerebino and Pagan (as political officer) had 600. Pieng came in rags from a battle; tired, Pieng had been in battle with Missiriya, and had ran out of ammunitions. I gave him boxes of ammunition; he was almost dancing with joy, such that he forgot his fatigue. He went back to the battle. Meanwhile, we were continuing to go and find his brother Miokol Deng Majok. Kawach had already sent a message ahead. Miokol had responded by giving orders to all his units to prepare to move.

We then began operating in Bahr el Ghazal while the forces of Miokol were fighting the Muraheleen, who were local Missiriya forces that were supported by the Army. The first offensive operation of Jamus was in Aweil town. The forces were very disciplined. What we were doing in Bahr el Ghazal and was being done in Malakal were similar. It was recruitment along with propaganda. When I was in the field, Dr. John was in touch with me and Kuol Deng Abot who was Military Intelligence, as I was Political Commissar. Elijah was commander of the first company. Awan Alier commanded the second company. There were 300 to 400 soldiers. Although Kawach was difficult, we managed to work together. When we arrived in Tonj, Garang Deng Aguer came with a guide, Arop Achir, to talk to us. Garang Deng Aguer was sent from Wau. We informed Dr. John that Garang Deng Aguer had come and that he was moving with a guide and two women. Garang Deng Aguer was a business man in Wau and Khartoum and he came in their car. Dr. John called me and he said, "You tell Kawach Makuei that they should not be allowed to go back." Kawach wanted to talk to Salva and Salva acknowledged the instruction. This is how Garang Deng Aguer became part of SPLM/A by being captured, with the two girls, one of whom was the daughter of a sister of Kawach. She later married William Nyuon. The other was the daughter of a senior teacher from Tonj, Banyjang. Her father was an old teacher and also a politician. Later, she was married to Malong Awan. The most important part is that Garang Deng Aguer became part of the movement and started moving with us. Arop Achir escaped somewhere around Yirol.

We captured two Germans for propaganda purposes to let the world know that there was a Movement called SPLM/A. It was then that Dr. John wanted to send us Salva. Arok had been put in the High Command. The agreement was that the High Command would not be expanded, but then Arok came. So, Kawach was angry because Arok's assignment was not what had been

agreed. When Garang sent Salva to him with Deng Wek, Salva sent a message instructing Kawach to go a certain destination. But Kawach Makuei refused. We spent the night. The following day, we left, but fell into a well-planned ambush by Jadalla who is the current Governor of Jubeke State. At that time, he was a Lieutenant in the Sudanese Army. He had two APCs. Our force was exhausted and we had so many recruits, which was also a liability because many of them were untrained. I was at the HQ with Kawach and we had a company in front and another one behind. One, commanded by Ayeny Aleu, was behind us taking care of the wounded. The overall command was with us. Elijah Hon was commanding the company ahead of us. He fell into a serious ambush. We stopped and agreed that Kawach and Bol Awolnhom should divert with the recruits led by people who knew the border. I decided with Bagat Aguek to reinforce Elijah because he did not have many forces. We left a force to stay with Kawach and the Germans. We went to reinforce Elijah with only 20 soldiers.

We entered the forest and started screaming "Jamus." We were lucky at that time because the Sudanese army was fearing us because of our operations and propaganda. Although this was a reckless act, it started raining and that combined with the inflated belief in our numbers, saved us that day. Jadalla's forces retreated. I was wounded in the battle. It was the 19th of July. The grass was long; so, it was difficult to see the enemy. I was shot in the thigh. Awan Lukuk, my bodyguard, was shot in the stomach. Our deployment was even wrong, which is testament to how reckless we were. Awan told me, "Beny (chief), come and take my gun, I think I am dying." I forgot about my wound and raised my arm so that my soldiers would come. I did not feel my wound. They did come and started helping. My leg then became heavy, as it started to rain. I took Awan's gun. Jadalla was withdrawing because of the rain. Later, he told me that he would not have retreated had he known our true numbers. Awan died on the way. Around 10 pm at night, we discovered our forces with Kawach on the border roasting meat. The Germans were there. They had really suffered. My leg meanwhile was bleeding. I found the Germans with Kawach Makuei. One of them asked, "Are you wounded?" The older German said, "They should have killed you, because you are keeping us unnecessarily."

Two days later, Dr. John came with Salva, a diplomat from the German Embassy and Garang Diing from Germany, whom the Germans had sent for. Kerebino also came to join Garang. I was three days wounded. I had some bandage but no pain killer. Atem Yak, who was the SPLA information officer, was also there. For some reason, Dr. John wanted me to translate from Arabic to English, but I was in pain and could not talk. I said, "Let somebody else take

over.” Garang said, “You should go for treatment.” He sent me away to his compound. Meanwhile, the Germans were released.

When we were going to Itang, we met Arok Thon who was commanding a force, the second force mostly from Bor. Chol Deng Alak was with him. Now released and trained, he headed a company, under Arok. When we met, and we talked, Chol told me that his wife, Theresa, was coming. They would later have two children, Ayak and Alak. At that time, he wanted to go back to Bilpam to meet her. I talked to him and told him to continue with us. When we got to Itang, I decided to build a hut with local materials. I stayed there while Chol received his wife around Bor. Arok, who was a refined officer, very sociable and well trained, gave Chol permission to bring his wife to Itang. When he came, he found that I had already built my hut. I gave him my hut and I went to the HQ at Bilpam.

Dr. Riek had joined the Movement in 1984 after he finished his PhD. He went to rescue an Ethiopian force in a place called Makuach that was besieged by Ethiopian Nuer. The group which had been taken to Makuach for regrouping was attacked by the Ethiopians under someone called Tawath, who had been with Mengistu as First Party Secretary in Gambella. He was a well-educated, tall young man, very committed to Mengistu. He had been condemned by Meles, but later was admired by many within the TPLF and became the leader of a remnant group opposed to Meles and the mainstream of the party. We went with Dr. Riek on that operation and successfully brought the forces back in September. The late Bulabek Deng Majok, an elder brother of Pieng, came from the Sudanese army, where he was a captain. He had graduated from Khartoum University and gone to Military college. He then joined the SPLA. When I came back from the tour in Bahr el Ghazal, he had already joined the Movement. When I was recuperating in Itang, he found me there as he was headed to Bilpam. We spent a week together and I gave him some few things, including books. In Bilpam, where he would be training, he could read. As you can see, each of these brothers came to the Movement independently, and we met along the way.

Chegai Atem was a commander in Bilpam. When we went with Dr. Riek to relieve those forces, the Nuer attacked us from behind. It was Kerebino and Chegai Atem who mobilized soldiers to reinforce us. This is where Bulabek Deng Majok was killed, along with some very refined officers from Aweil. We arrived in the afternoon, and found Kerebino sitting by the river. I came with Elijah Hon and Dr. Riek Machar, who was our senior. Before greeting us, he said, “Deng, your brother is killed.” I said, “I have many brothers.” He said, “Bulabek.” I removed myself and sat alone. I was shocked. The way he passed

the information seemed to me very rough. I refused to eat. This is how our brothers would fall.

After that, Riek was taken to Addis and was the first to open our office there. We then went to Bilpam and stayed doing administrative work under Salva. From there, we were taken to military college inside Ethiopia. These were camps where ZANU PF, SWAPO, FRELIMO, MPLA, ANC and others were all being trained. Ethiopia trained most of these liberation movements quietly under Mengistu. Cubans and Soviets were giving operational support, but the training was done by the Ethiopians. They took us as the second batch of officers in this military college. The first wave included Alfred Ladu Gore and Riek Machar, while we were in operations in Bahr el Ghazal. We spent six or seven months in the military college, and when we finished, we were waiting to be deployed. Then Pagan called for me and said, "Tomorrow, we are going to Addis to take over the office from Riek Machar who wants to go to the field."

Riek had already started to think about leadership. He told me in Addis, "Deng, it would have been good for you to spend more time in the field because military command is important. It will take quite a while before we liberate South Sudan. So, let us do operations together so that we cooperate towards the future." I remained in Addis, however, since it was under order. And I began to work closely with John Garang and wherever he went, I coordinated his affairs. I stayed there for six years, going on missions into the South Sudan with John Garang, and also going on missions abroad, sometimes with John Garang and sometimes alone. Then in October 1987, I decided to get married, and my fiancé, whose name is Misrak, was a first-year student in Addis Ababa university; I had nothing in my hand, but Dr. John gave me something. Fortunately, things were inexpensive in Ethiopia. I was married on Oct 15, 1987, and sent my wife to stay with my brother, Dr. Francis Deng, who was in Washington DC, as I continued my work with the Movement.

The period that followed was normal administration and missions. The SPLM office was composed of two departments, the office of the Chairman, which I was running, and the Information office headed by Atem Garang. Nhial was a staff of that office, working as an English news reader. I was mainly coordinating the logistics in the field with the army commanders and the Ethiopian government, and also moving with Dr. John in the region to solicit support and to brief the regional leaders about the struggle in South Sudan. In terms of political mobilization of African leaders behind the struggle, Dr. John was very successful, winning almost every part of Africa. Also, we were mobilizing both military and financial support. Most of the times, I would go with him and sometimes with Salva and Lam Akol who came later in 1986.

Nhial Deng came when Lam Akol came from Khartoum. Dr. John assigned Nhial to be my senior. He had already been doing an assignment for SPLA in Khartoum, along with Edward Lino and Lam, along with northerners like Taisier Mahomed Ali. Dr. Peter Nyot was also with them. Those were the people running the SPLM/A secret office in Khartoum and we were coordinating with them. Then, in 1987, Lam, Yusuf Kuwa and James Wani were promoted to the military high command, and were sent to Cuba for training. When they came back, they were assigned, with Lam responsible for Eastern Upper Nile, Renk Area, and Dr. Riek, already in Northern Upper Nile and Yusuf Kuwa in Nuba Mountainss. The caliber of these officers was very high and the training was excellent. Our organization and political orientation were also strong at this time.

Still, I think the quality of the Ngok people Dr. John interacted with early on, during the formative stages of the Movement, was exceptional. For example, he interacted with the late Miokol, who started the Anya-Nya II. They spent quite a significant amount of time together, although I was at Operations during that time and did not witness their interactions first hand. I was the first person with Kuol Deng Abot and Chol Deng Alak to interact with Garang. And Garang saw something different in us and raised us up. Then Oyai came with 44 men and Bagat Aguek came with 700; these were the first to join after battalion 104 and 105. This massive Ngok support in the early days of the Movement lay its military foundation and ethic. Dr. John undoubtedly was moved by this.

The second in command to Bagat Aguek was a brother of Bona called Ring who was a very good man. Many young Ngok intellectuals came in 1984, like Pieng Deng, Kuol Deng Abot, Kuol Deim, Monyluak Alor, and Kuol Alor Chol; then later Monywir and others came and all stayed with Salva. In Khartoum, Garang was very close to Edward Lino when he was still in the Army. These were all very high caliber people. John was impressed as he found these people from Abyei to be exceptional; also, they had the special problem of their area, Abyei, in addition to the general problem of Southerners. This seemed to fuel their commitment to the revolution. John knew the importance of political orientation and morale. He understood that he could harness this and channel it into the revolutionary spirit and culture of the Movement.

Later, people would say the Ngok did not have foot soldiers, only officers. That is not true. It was only propaganda that said Ngok were not foot soldiers. Others would say the Ngok were eliminated. That also is an exaggeration. Those who were killed from within were mostly in 1991 – those of Kuol Deng Majok, the brother of Molana Abyei, Juong Alor – these were all graduates, very brilliant boys from Abyei and Bor, who were killed by Riek. Although he keeps denying and saying that they were killed far from where he was, it is known that

he was there. Not only the fact that they were killed, but also the way in which they were killed was bad. The truth is the Ngok were there in every force that went for training. The force was all over Bahr el Ghazal – whenever there were new recruits, the majority would be from Aweil and Gogrial and Rumbek, and also from Ngok. In every force graduated, there was a group from Ngok. The entire Bor left – Bor town and all the villages – that is why even today they are dominant in the army. But the reason was not favoritism, it was circumstance; they shared the same way the Ngok were facing the circumstances of being on the border, the frontline, facing the direct frontal attack of the northern regime and their proxy militias.

There are also some propagandists who say John Garang used me to be foreign minister when I should have been serving as governor, and Nhial was meant to be the Secretary in charge of external relations. These people also say that Garang made a mistake by using Edward Lino whom Garang trusted very much, but would accuse people falsely in order to put them in trouble with Garang, at a time when Salva was the intelligence chief. There are those who would like to say that these decisions by Dr. John, not to follow the established assignments, seeded enmity in the Movement and that is why problems later emerged. Of course, these things are not true.

Nhial in 1987 was made a Governor, although he was junior to us, including to Pieng. That was a decision reached by Dr. John and Salva himself. We all wanted to go and make a mobilization campaign in Bahr el Ghazal. And so Salva told Garang, “Let us use Nhial in Bahr el Ghazal so that we gain the popularity from the name of his father.” I was in the office of the Chairman, working in information, and Nhial was with me, although he was junior, and we were very good friends. Salva was very loyal and never questioned John Garang. So, Garang agreed with his suggestion and Nhial went down to Tonj. Arop was his radio man. Edward was a commander of the central command from Wau to Raja, while Malong was in the North. I would come to the field from time to time, particularly to Eastern Upper Nile and Eastern Equatoria. I would then go to Chad, Congo Brazzaville, Uganda, Zambia, Mozambique and Harare on logistics missions to get our military hardware. So, what happened is that in December 1999, we had an SPLM senior officers conference in Rumbek. I was nominated after that to replace Nhial as Governor, to take over the administration for reasons that were known to Garang and Salva.

As Governor, I had two headquarters – Rumbek in the rainy season along with Cueibet and Yirol, and in the dry season my HQ was Nyin Cuer near Thiet town; it was there that Salva would join me every dry season and we would move together until May / June, when he would come back and I would remain. Because I had developed some intimate relations with security officers

in all parts of Africa, based on the nature of my assignments – I was known to them and they were familiar with my style – John would call me to go to a specific area where I might be most effective. This was by virtue of the sensitive nature of the assignments and my historical involvement in that particular area of work, and not in order to take Nhial's responsibilities. Some individuals from Bahr el Ghazal went to Salva and complained that I was leaving the whole of Bahr el Ghazal ungoverned; but I had two highly qualified deputies who continued to run the administration. So, there was no problem. People were wrongly complaining, and I doubt that Nhial himself was part of that because he is quiet and it is not in his nature to complain frivolously.

Another area where people are now misrepresenting history is with respect to the New Sudan vision, its contents and its roots. Some people now like to say that it was something Dr. John just used as a tactic, but did not really believe in. They say this in order to diminish its importance in the history of the Movement. They even go to the extent of trying to blame the current problems in South Sudan on the Movement and the New Sudan vision. They claim that the SPLM did not have a political ideology upon which to construct a nation. This is one of the most erroneous and dangerous misrepresentations.

The New Sudan idea had been the vision of John Garang even before he joined the Movement. He used to tell us that he differed with Joseph Lagu in 1972 and wrote his position in a letter. It is not something new; he used to preach it to us. He was genuine about the New Sudan vision but he was sensitive to the level of consciousness of his people. He knew you cannot force people to accept a beautiful vision that they don't understand. That did not stop him, however, from building that consciousness patiently and consistently. He used to say that Sudan is a diverse country linguistically, culturally and religiously – and that diversity is a great thing. He would give the example of the United States of America where he lived during his studies from the undergraduate to the PhD levels. He would say, "I spent 9 years in the United States. So, if I live for 90 years, then 10% of my life would have been spent there. America was the land of the indigenous Americans – just like us here – but others came – British, Italians, Irish and others. The Africans went by force, but then became Americans. America became the strongest in the world, because diversity is a blessing. So, we are Dinka-Sudanese, Bari-Sudanese, Azande-Sudanese, Nuer-Sudanese and others, with Sudan as our common foundation. But we each have our roots. There are ethnic diversities, but also religious diversities, and all of that is the Sudan." That message helped in mobilizing support from Darfur, Eastern Sudan, Nuba and others. Mansuor Khalid understood it and tried to campaign for it.

John was genuine about this New Sudan vision, but knew he would not force South Sudanese to embrace it. And they were destined to vote, either to be part of this great diversity or to be part of a people on their own. It was their right to be freely exercised. But he also said, if we break away, we can still come together in some way in the future. So, he believed in the two options.

He sold that idea to Mengistu. You know, Mengistu was not for the separation of South Sudan. He also persuaded Meles. But Meles also saw the right of the people to choose. Afwerki still has not accepted the separation of the South, for he believes that South Sudan is the only force that can check the spread of political Islam and fundamentalism. Whenever we went to Asmara, he would say that the South is not going to separate because it was the South who must protect the region, within a United Sudan, as an internal front. This means it cannot go its separate way, but rather should remain within, to work with Eritrea, for the two countries to strengthen each other against that common enemy.

In 1994, there was a Pan African Movement Conference in Kampala. Garang, Lual Diing and myself went; Riek also went separately as part of his Movement invited by Museveni. Afwerki sent his minister, Yemani – and he spoke very straightforwardly in a strong speech about the caste system in the Sudan to the extent that the Northerners walked out. We were happy, but a big group of Tanzanian youth were shouting “Garang is our commander and our Chief!” Mutrif Sadiq from Khartoum government came to us saying, “John, please talk to those youth.” He replied, “But they are Tanzanians...” That made South Sudanese movement very strong among the black Africans; for Eritreans, who had just fought for their liberation to say that they were even treated better in Sudan than Southerners was very condemning to the Northern Sudanese. The process of building support for the Movement is an involved history and a big part of what made the Movement succeed and grow to achieve the independence of South Sudan.

Our core strength came from the support we received in Africa. Ethiopia was a Marxist country and those who supported us in the beginning were Marxist and Socialist – Ethiopia, South Yemen, Libya and Cuba. We got our first material support and military equipment from Libya under Qadafi. Cuba took our youth to train them in technical fields, and they also trained our officers. South Yemen gave us a Mission and Yusuf Kuwa was the first to take that office. He used to say that he was the first Nuba Ambassador in the history of Sudan. And that is true. When I was the Minister of Foreign Affairs, I consciously recruited diplomats from the Nuba Mountains, which we called positive discrimination. Beshir even liked that and asked, “What about the Beja.”

John Garang did not want us to be in that box. He knew the importance of the West because he had been there. He used his friends in the United States, including the family in Iowa with whom he stayed. The lady who was a nurse came and worked with us. He brought Brian De Silva who was his colleague in Iowa and a friend. And he was very good about doing so much work within the Republican Party and the State Department. But we could not penetrate the Soviet Union, because it was in crisis. So, we could not benefit from it. We got no support from them. Anything from the Soviet Union came to us through Ethiopia, Yemen and Cuba. Mozambique, Zimbabwe, and Congo Brazzaville were all supportive – particularly Sassou Nguessa was our friend. I came to know all their capitals very well. It was the background of Dr. John that helped him to break into the Western world through his friends and the culture which he knew. That is why it was eventually the U.S. and the Troika that stood firmly with us upon independence in 2011.

I was Minister of Cabinet Affairs in 2012 after independence and Tony Blair came and met with Salva. He told President Salva that he had some funds and wanted to help us with capacity building. He said he could give one or two experienced persons to help in the organization of the Office of the President and training of the staff. Salva accepted, but later some people became suspicious of the white people in the office and so this initiative did not continue. Blair called to see me. I said I would go to him, but he said, “No, I will come by you.” And he came to my house instead. He asked me about the work of the Ministry of Cabinet Affairs.

As we spoke, the issue of democracy came up. He said, “Western democracy evolved over time; there were wars and dictatorships until we reached the stage we are at now. For you, you don’t need to embrace the current Western democracy overnight. Singapore for instance has gone from a very poor island to one of the most developed countries in the world in 30 years. An economic vision and a strong hand made Singapore what it is today. We differed with Lee Kuong Liu over his dictatorial style, but he led his country to develop. Take Malaysia, Mahathir was a harsh man, but look what he left behind. I am just coming from Rwanda where Paul Kagame has a tendency to be tough, but he has a very clear economic vision for his country. That is why I respect him. He listens to us and reaches out to people. Don’t try to copy Western democracy now; first you strike a balance: make your people happy with services and development, give them economy, technology, opportunity and infrastructure. All of these men, although dictators, had a vision and the capacity to make decisions. That is what they have in common and that is what you need.” If we had continued cooperating with Blair, I think South Sudan would have gone far.

In addition to these strong external relations, our internal negotiations with the Khartoum government were also important. Dialogue was a principal decision of the Movement since 1985 during the time of Reverend Janda, who was a friend of John Garang and the first commander of Malakal in 1972. From the beginning, dialogue was at the center of the struggle. After the signing of the first Protocol on the separation of religion and state, Salva was the head of the negotiation team; he was based in Nairobi. We were also there. We had spent a long time in the peace process and people were getting discouraged. But when we made the breakthrough, John Garang called us and said something important, "We have not been fighting Northern Sudanese because they are Arabs or Muslims, but because they had left us undeveloped in South Sudan. Now, an agreement is signed; let us develop our economic future." Then he came to Rumbek after the agreement, I think it was 2003. We then attacked Torit. That caused a problem. Since there was a ceasefire, we were accused of having violated the ceasefire. Sudan was upset and ready to declare war. Then Dr. John declared a major military offensive.

Now, he prepared himself for war. He said the system in Khartoum was weak. We developed 2 or 3 fronts. Eastern front was the main thrust from where we would push towards Khartoum. At that time, I was in Nairobi. Justin Yac was also in Nairobi. We had a senior officers conference in Rumbek. I was transporting everyone there. I remained with Justin. I was contacted by the Americans and Kenyans. They asked me to tell Dr. John to come from the field because they needed to talk to him. They said they wanted to bring us together with Khartoum to resolve what they saw as a crisis situation. I informed Dr. John, but he was dismissive. That discouraged me because I thought he should come. Justin was good. He took the phone and supported me. We tried to convince him for days. At one time, Dr. Garang told me, "Take the nearest flight and come to Rumbek as you are the Governor; don't think about this Ali Osman." I responded, "No Beny (chief), you come and we will go together." Dr. John would immediately report back to the other senior officers with him – to Salva, Elijah Malok, Yassir Arman, Pagan Amum, and others. Yassir and Pagan were adamantly against talking. They had come from Eastern Sudan and were prepared for the fight. Dr. John said to me, "Are you disobeying my orders?" I said, "No, but you have to come." Ali Osman had already come to Nairobi at the behest of the Americans and we were being pushed by the Kenyans on the ground.

At one point, Elijah Malok said, "Dr. John, why is Deng insisting? There must be a reason. You go for a few days and come back." The rest objected, including Salva. Then Garang told the officers, "Look at what Deng Alor is saying. I am telling him to come and join us, and he says I should go to him."

Justin continued to press forward with me saying, "We should not let this fall." He tried to talk to Salva, but Salva blocked him. Then I talked to them again and said, "This will be embarrassing; please come tomorrow and you will go back the next day." He said, "So you are not coming?" I said, "No, it's for you to come." He laughed and said, "See Salva, your friend Deng is giving me orders." Salva then said, "So, you go." Then Dr. John changed his mind immediately and that shows the respect he had for Salva Kiir, who was very loyal to him and the Movement from the beginning.

Everyone had been calling around. Beshir himself wanted peace. Ali Osman was the ruler in the party at that time. He was powerful within the NCP. When Garang came, he clicked with Ali Osman who is also an intellectual. He decided to play the game. Ali Osman saw that Garang was sharp, educated and refined. He was scared as he saw that this was a dangerous man. In Simba Lodge in Naivasha, they would sit for hours and actually became friends. People were surprised. Then Garang said to us, "Ok, let us try this. We should not disappoint our friends all over the world." He put the military on hold. And this is how we began the negotiations. Committees started to form and all things started moving from there. But a key factor was that just like Garang, Ali was also empowered and was not taking direction from Bashir.

In the end when Ali came back from Haj pilgrimage, both committed fully and moved forward until the first agreement was signed. When he was coming to Nairobi, Dr. John did not think that he was going to spend even two or three days. In hindsight, I can see that the reason why it required so much discussion by myself and Justin was so that Dr. John could bring others on board. He would often brief me at that time that the rest of the commanders were not on board, except Elijah. But when he had Salva convinced, then he was ready to move and his negotiations progressed with clarity and confidence until the agreement was signed.

So, in this brief rendition of a few historical narratives, it's clear that the Ngok Dinka and even members of my family did not have any privileged position in the SPLA, but rather were among its founders. We each found our own way into the Movement, and through our various routes reached the senior command, where there was only myself, Pieng Deng, Arop Moyak and Edward Lino. All others were officers. Many died along the way. The dominant people among the SPLA commanders were those that John Garang had groomed, once in the command – like Pieng, Oyai, Hoth, Gier, etc. The majority were from Bor who came first and up until now they are still dominant in the command more than any other group. Edward Lino was prominent in intelligence, but others like Pieng were in the command like the others, and had distinguished themselves by doing very well in battle in Bahr el Ghazal.

The political work that all of us did as we had to pass through political awareness orientation was influential. There was no discrimination, nor tribalism; nothing of the sort, just a genuine comradeship. You wouldn't even know where people came from. The army was completely de-tribalized. This idea of tribalism really only started to come up with Riek Machar. He was the first to introduce it with the concept of Nuer versus Dinka, which he pursued aggressively with the massacres in Bor. And when he took over, most of the Dinka officers who were with him were eliminated. There was then a reaction of Dinka against Nuer. And then there was the reaction from Bahr el Ghazal that they were the majority after the split and should therefore have a dominant position. Dr. John didn't buy that, but it started to develop in Bahr el Ghazal. There, the officers from Abyei were senior. This had to do with the evolution of the Movement and nothing to do with favoritism. Seniority always factored in along with education, training and capability. Otherwise, the same allegation of favoritism could have been said about the Bor, who still dominate to this day, with 3 out of 5 top commanders from Bor. This is a historical reality and not favoritism. If the allegation is that I, Pieng, and Edward Lino were responsible in senior command in Bahr el Ghazal and were from Abyei, the truth is that it was Mijak, Malong and Pieng who were in charge. When Mijak went abroad for studies, Pieng took over. Regardless, these allegations of Ngok dominance at that time were cooked by enemies of the Movement whose desire was to plant the seeds of divisions.

Even the categories of Nuba and Blue Nile as distinct from the southern SPLM and the broader struggle were initially not there. They only came later with the agreement. Had it not been for John Garang, the Abyei Protocol would not have been there. He was widely supported in his stance on Abyei. But in Bahr el Ghazal, there was not much support, maybe because of the feeling that Abyei was favored. This slowly developed from the agitation of some people who did not like the fact that Abyei officers were senior. The majority of the fighting force was not from Abyei at that time. These agitators were people who did not know the history of how the SPLA had been formed and that there was always a certain percentage from Abyei during the formative years. Even this feeling about tribalism that we have seen growing since the December 2013 war really started after the split. It affected Nuer-Dinka relations; it affected Dinka-Bor relations; and it also has effects within Bahr el Ghazal, creating certain feelings of discontent among groups.

Under John Garang there was no doubt at all that he was going to pursue the issues of Abyei, Blue Nile and Nuba Mountainss and that the protocols on those areas would have been implemented. No one doubted his commitment

and his responsibility for the Movement and its vision. It was after the death of Dr. John that people started to doubt the direction we were headed.

Since the 1991 split, there have been so many undercurrent feelings, misunderstandings here and there. Some people started to come out and say, "We are the majority; Salva should be the one to sign the Agreement." Salva didn't believe it, but there were people who were saying it. Some people came in between them. People were carrying rumors between John Garang and Salva Kiir. At a certain point, these rumors became louder. And Salva thought John Garang was planning to replace him. John Garang suspected that Salva was planning to overthrow him. And that is when people said John Garang had ordered Pieng to arrest Salva. When Pieng heard this, he went to Salva with Kuol Deng Abot, to assure him that the rumor was not true. I then followed them. Some of these people who were agitating were comrades from within the Movement, and others were Dinkas who were playing a tribal card.

During the course of the struggle, issues had come up that caused some people to develop their own grievances. These, such as the case of Bona Malual, who was an advocate of Salva Kiir and supported his launching a coup in 2004, continue to plague the South. When the issue of slavery redemption started in Darfur and two Northern Sudanese university lecturers, professors and others shed light on it and brought it to the fore, the reaction was generally one of outrage. When Christian Solidarity International came at first to try to redeem the enslaved children, people were sympathetic, thinking perhaps that this was genuine. But after a short while, thoughts on the issue began to change and many of us started to distance ourselves from it. Dr. John started questioning the practice. Bona Malual who was actively engaged in the practice didn't like it. It increasingly became apparent that the whole thing was for making money. Both Salva and Yac were very supportive of the practice. And, of course, we respected their position and tried not to interfere. Even when we saw what was happening and disapproved, we did not complain.

The argument that the money raised in the practice was used to buy arms was not correct. In the history of the SPLA, we never bought weapons. Our friends gave us weapons freely. In Lusaka, there was an ammunition factory for Southern Africa – serving ZANU, SWAPO, FRELIMO, MPLA, ANC, built by Kaunda. Kaunda used to give us weapons. Mengistu used to give us a full 737 load transporting ammunition. People were even buying from us. I don't remember civilians who were armed. Pieng, Malong and I were in charge and we never saw anything like that.

While Africa supported us militarily, there was massive humanitarian support from the West.

Chapter Four:

From Teacher to Fighter

Kuol Deim Kuol

"Never play with the feelings of others, because you may win the game ... but the risk is that you will surely lose the person for a life time."

Shakespeare

I was 24 years old when I joined the SPLM/A on the 25th April 1984, after my graduation from the University of Khartoum. I had worked as Teaching Assistant of mathematics for six (6) months in the same university. Two reasons motivated me to join the SPLA: The first was to struggle for the Abyei Area to re-join the southern region of the Sudan (the current South Sudan). The Ngok Dinka people of Abyei were subjected to endless atrocities in Kordofan, and Khartoum regime was denying them the right to decide in a plebiscite to re-join the southern region or remain in Kordofan as had been agreed in the Addis Ababa Agreement of 1972 between the government of the Sudan and Anya-Nya liberation movement. The second motivation for me joining the SPLA was to struggle for the independence of Southern Region of the Sudan, because of discrimination on the basis of race and religion in the country.

In the presentation of their case to the Abyei Boundaries Commission (ABC) 2005, the Ngok Dinka identified the root causes of the conflict in the Abyei Area, with an emphasis on several issues (The SPLM Preliminary Presentation on the Boundaries of the Abyei Area, 2005, p.6-8). Historically, the Ngok Dinka of the Abyei Area had suffered greatly during the Turko-Egyptian Rule (1821-1881) and the Mahdist state (1881 – 1898) because of their proximity and exposure to slavers from Northern Sudan. A leading historian on Sudan observes in this period that, “today’s lurid crop of massive insecurity, enslavement, repression, and genocide was first sown generations ago, and has been nurtured by Sudanese and foreign interests ever since” (Daly, 1993:1). The Baggara (Missiriya Arabs) fully participated in organized slave raids in the Ngok Dinka area and also in other parts of Southern Sudan (Beswick, 1999).

According to the same source,

The Baggara were permitted to pay their taxes to the Turko-Egyptian administration with slaves. When the Egyptian authorities tried to close the Nile route as a result of international pressure to end the slave trade, the Baggara allied themselves with the most powerful northern Sudanese slavers, among them al-Zubayr Rahma, who had built a slaving empire in Bahr el Ghazal. A traveler noted as late as 1925-6 that slave raiding in Kordofan continued on a large scale on the “Arab-Negro frontier” of southwest Kordofan (Beswick, 1999). Even after three decades of nominal Anglo-Egyptian rule in 1927, the area of Ngok Dinka remained a ground for slave hunting (SIR, 1927).

The Northern Sudanese administrators have consistently favored the Baggara at the expense of the Ngok Dinka in post-independent Sudan for racial and religious reasons. Precisely, the Northern Sudanese authorities often pursued counter-insurgency policies during South-North conflicts to deepen the rift between Ngok Dinka and the neighboring Missiriya Arabs (Baggara). Those discriminatory policies have caused conflict to erupt in the area to an unprecedented scale. The Ngok Dinka people were subjected to endless atrocities. A few examples will suffice to show the government involvement in the violence. First, during the 1965 hostilities between the Ngok Dinka and Humr Missiriya, the government security forces sent to the fighting scene at Ngol (about 50 miles north-east of Abyei town) failed to act neutrally and instead, sided with and assisted the Humr Missiriya against the Ngok Dinka. That incident resulted in the death and displacement of many Ngok-Dinka civilians from the Northwest, North and Northeast of the Abyei Area. The 1965 conflict was started by Missiriya when they killed a man from Ajuong Rek Dinka of Awiel and beat drum with his mutilated arms. Ajuong Rek Dinka is to the west of the Abyei Area and used to graze livestock. In the course of these hostilities, the government forces and authorities assisted the Missiriya to

massacre over 200 Dinka civilians including women and children at the towns of El Muglad and Babanussa.

Second, the Paramount Chief of Ngok Dinka was assassinated in Abyei town by the Sudan Armed Forces on September 17, 1970 while on an evening walk near the village. Ngok Paramount Chief, Moyak Deng, two of his brothers and three uncles were shot dead by a military squad led personally by the then-commanding officer 1st Lt. Mohamed El Basha. Third, the government security forces conspired with Missiriya and ambushed trucks carrying civilians to Abyei from the North in May 1977. The government security forces conspired and collaborated with some armed Missiriya tribesmen and ambushed three trucks carrying nearly 200 unarmed Dinka passengers traveling from Northern towns back home to Abyei Area. That brutal and indiscriminate act led to the death of more than one hundred Ngok Dinka people, including a PhD student of History, Mark Mijak Abiem. In another incident, one evening in July 1981 a group of unidentified assassins believed to have been backed by local government security forces indiscriminately opened fire on Ngok Dinka government officials and local leaders, killing a school teacher among the group. That incident marked the beginning of the Abyei Liberation Movement, which spearheaded the formation of Anya-Nya II in the areas of northern Bahr el Ghazal and Abyei Area in 1982. The Anya-Nya II dissolved itself in 1984 and its members joined the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A) in the same year.

Following the formation of the SPLM/A, the whole Northern Bahr el Ghazal including the Ngok Dinka area experienced the killing of civilians, massive cattle raids, forced displacement of rural population, destruction of properties, and abduction of children and women into slavery at the hands of the government-sponsored Murahleen Arab militia. By the end of October 1985, the majority of the Ngok Dinka had abandoned their rural livelihoods and migrated to Northern Sudan. According to a community survey, the population of the Ngok Dinka that had moved to northern cities is estimated to be more than 80 per cent. The rest of the population settled in the southern part of Kfir River and a few in Abyei town and surrounding villages. In December 1985, the Arab nomads, with the support from the army, followed those who had moved with their cattle southward and attacked them in the Twich area (Mawson, 1990). The government and Missiriya joint intention behind that massive displacement of the indigenous Ngok Dinka from their villages was to occupy their lands. Occupation now is real in villages of Dag-jur, Nyama, Rumthil, Thigei, Langar, Miding, Mabek and other places.

Given the high level of motivation behind their joining the rebellion, it is not surprising that the SPLM/A recruits from Abyei Area rose rapidly from the

rank and file to the leadership level. The training of the SPLA officer cadets, up until the time of this writing, is organized into different batches called Shields. The first batch is called Shield One, followed by Shield Two and so on. The first six batches were trained in the SPLA Institute of Revolutionary War Studies (IRWS) in Bonga, Ethiopia. I obtained the leading examination marks in Shield Two. Some of my comrades in Shield Two are Honorable Kuol Manyang Juuk, Dr. James Wani Igga, Hon. Deng Alor Kuol, General Oyay Deng Ajak, Hon. Gier Chuang Aluong, Dr. Majak D'Agoot Atem and Major General Kuol Deng-Abot Kuol.

I progressed through the ranking and promotion systems of the SPLA. The ranking system was that a university graduate was commissioned as First Lieutenant (1st Lt.), master's degree holder as Captain (Capt.) and PhD holder as A/Cdr or Major. I was commissioned as 1st Lt. from Shield Two effective from 1.1.1985 since I graduated from the University of Khartoum in 1983, and I was assigned as instructor in the IRWS and participated in the training of Shield Three in Bonga. Promotion was by batches from the rank of Second Lieutenant (2nd Lt.) to the rank of First Lieutenant (1st Lt.) and from the rank of 1st Lt. to the rank of Captain (Capt.). However, promotion was by merit from the rank of Captain to rank of Alternate Commander (A/Cdr.) and from the rank of A/Cdr. to the rank of full Commander (Cdr), which was the highest rank in the SPLA. I was promoted to Captain in 1988 after having attended Political Commissars course in Havana, Cuba, and assigned as the commanding officer of the SPLA Bright Star Campaign Mobile Training Centre, first at Khor-cum, which is between Raad and Boma, and with the progress of the Campaign the Training Centre was moved to Kidepo of Kapoeta State. From Kidepo, I was transferred back to Bonga and assigned as the deputy commanding officer of the SPLA Bonga Unified Training Centre (BUTC) and participated in the training of Shield Five and the SPLA Intifadha Infantry Division of about 8,000 soldiers. Dr. Majak D'Agoot was the commander of BUTC.

Then, I was promoted by merit from Capt. to A/Cdr. in 1991 after I successfully established SPLM/A Political School in Isoke of Torit area and trained Isoke Batches One and Two. In 1992, I was transferred to Boma as the commanding officer of the area, and managed to defeat the repeated enemy attacks to capture the area. Our historical victories in Boma had raised the morale of the SPLA soldiers in some fronts and encouraged them to launch counter attacks on the enemy Saif-Alubor Campaign until the SPLA was about to capture Juba. In 1994, I was promoted to the rank of Cdr. in recognition of our efforts in defending Boma Area Command against the enemy attacks from Pochalla and Pibor areas, and I transferred to Kapoeta Area Command as the commanding officer with my HQs in Chukudum. In 1997, I was transferred

from Kapoeta area to Yei SPLA GHQs as SPLA Director of Political and Moral Orientation. In 2002, the SPLA GHQs was shifted from Yei to Rumbek.

In 2005, after the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), my rank was assessed as Major General (Maj. Gen.) or two-star-general, in the conventional ranking system and assigned by Gen. Dr. John Garang de Mabior as Director of Moral Orientation (M.O.) and SPLA Spokesman in the SPLA GHQs in Juba. In 2010, I was promoted to the rank of Lieutenant General (Lt. Gen.) or three-star-general, and assigned as Deputy Chief of General Staff for Logistics in the SPLA GHQs. In 2012, I was put in the SPLA Reserve Officers List (as there is no retirement in the SPLA, till the time of this writing) and assigned as Director General of Military Economic Corporation in the Ministry of Defence. I was relieved from the position of the Director General of Military Economic Corporation in May 2016 during the civil war in the country, but have remained in the SPLA Reserve Officers List, till the time of this writing.

Although the cause of Abyei was a major factor in our joining the SPLM/A, we considered ourselves as part and parcel of the movement and indeed as Southern Sudanese. Although an area of origin of a person did not count much in the SPLA, Ngok Dinka people of Abyei were considered as part and parcel of the South. They were highly respected as the people who started Anya-Nya II in northern Bahr el Ghazal in 1982, and participated also in the establishment of the SPLM/A in 1983. The Ngok Dinka people of Abyei were the second-largest group after Nuer in Bilpam at the beginning of the Movement. Late Capt. Bagat Aguek Achak from Mareng section of Ngok Dinka of Abyei and a number of fighters of Abyei Liberation Movement (ALM) had arrived in Bilpam before the establishment of SPLM/A in 1983. Late Capt. Bagat was sent to Bilpam by late Miokol Deng Kuol, the overall commander of ALM, who remained in northern Bahr el Ghazal merging various guerrilla units into Anya-Nya II. The mission of Capt. Bagat to Bilpam was to explore the possibility of merging their movement in northern Bahr el Ghazal with Anya-Nya II group in Bilpam.

Amongst the sons of Abyei who participated in the establishment of SPLM/A are Cdr. Deng Alor Kuol, Cdr. Chol Deng Alak, Cdr. Kuol Deng-Abot Kuol and late Capt. Bagat Aguek Achak. As mentioned earlier, late Capt. Bagat was sent to Bilpam by Miokol Deng, therefore, the latter also had contributed in the establishment of SPLM/A in 1983. Ngok Dinka of Abyei in the SPLM/A were also considered as very brave fighters. A brave SPLA soldier used to be called Ma-Ngok. Late Cdr. Kerebino Kwanyin Bol was nicknamed Ma-Ngok for his bravery in the battle field. This is because the sons of Abyei who were the first fighters in the SPLA were very good fighters due to the

fighting experience which they had gained in Abyei Liberation Movement and Anya-Nya II. In addition, male members of Ngok Dinka of Abyei are culturally brought up as tough warriors to defend their land from any external threat.

The prominent image the Ngok Dinka had in the struggle largely due to their bravery probably accounts for the allegation that Abyei dominated the SPLM/A. But that allegation is unfounded and baseless for a number of reasons. Firstly, major decisions were made by the members of SPLM/A High Command and were issued to all units of the SPLM/A in the form of orders or directives by the Chairman and Commander-in-Chief, Dr. John Garang de Mabior. There was no member of SPLM/A High Command who hailed from Abyei Area. Secondly, the highest positions held by the sons of Abyei were those of the Director of Cdr. Dr. Garang's Office abroad, which was held by Cdr. Deng Alor Kuol, and the Director of SPLA Officers Training College, held by Cdr. Chol Deng Alak, who was under the direct command of Cdr. Salva Kiir Mayardit, the Commander of SPLM/A Unified Training Centre. Those two offices were medium positions in the SPLM/A and had no capacity to make major decisions.

The other officers from Abyei Area were field officers under the command of senior officers from other areas of South Sudan. However, most of the sons of Abyei were performing very well in their various assignments due to their good level of education (some of them were university graduates), honesty, and full commitment to the cause of SPLM/A, which they believed would solve the Abyei issue. Their hard work had earned them respect from the rank and file and the leadership of the SPLM/A. There were no complaints about the presence of Ngok Dinka people of Abyei in the SPLM/A at that time although that is the case now from a very few who were in the diaspora or were allies of the Khartoum regime during the war.

The same can be said about the assertion that Abyei dominated GOSS. Again, this is another unfounded and baseless allegation for a number of reasons. Firstly, Dr. Luka Biong Deng, who had been Minister in the Office of the President of the Government of Southern Sudan (GOSS), was the only minister who hailed from Abyei area in the GOSS. It is not possible for one minister to dominate a cabinet of more than thirty ministers. Secondly, Deng Alor Kuol was a minister in the Government of National Unity in Khartoum, and other sons of Abyei were working as civil servants and officers in the military or other organised forces, who could not dominate GOSS, despite their quality education.

Some of these allegations may give the wrong impression that Southerners are not fully committed to the cause of Abyei. Although no study has been carried out to assess the commitment of Southerners to the cause of Abyei,

judging from the popular talk of South Sudanese, one feels that the majority of the populace are committed to the cause of Abyei. The dominant opinion in the SPLA, where I have been working, is that Abyei belongs to South Sudan and that is why many southern soldiers were killed in action defending Abyei Area when the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) attacked the area in May 2008 and again in May 2011. But there are a few individuals from Greater Bahr el Ghazal, particularly from Gogrial and Twich areas, who are against the cause of Abyei. Those were behind the exclusion of Ngok Dinka of Abyei from the membership of the so-called Jieng Council of Elders, which is accused of spearheading ethnically based attacks against other tribes of South Sudan.

Bona Malual Madut appears to advocate the dismissal of Abyei people from the government of South Sudan in his book under the title *Abyei of the Ngok Dinka: Not Yet South Sudan*. There is a general feeling that Bona might have influenced some top members of the government of South Sudan to dismiss young officers from Abyei who had played pivotal roles in the liberation of South Sudan, among them Gen. Pieng Deng Kuol and myself. One former SPLA Deputy Chief of General Staff for Administration told me in March 2016, "You people of Abyei are Arabs; go back to Khartoum where you belong."

Those few individuals erroneously believe that the ministerial positions of the government of South Sudan assigned to those from Abyei Area were supposed to go to them. They ignore the fact that, according to the CPA of 2005, the citizens of Abyei Area are citizens of both Bahr el Ghazal (South Sudan) and Kordofan (Sudan). In addition, the people of Abyei Area are citizens of South Sudan according to the current Constitution of South Sudan.

It is of course difficult to tell whether South Sudanese commitment to Abyei cause is united or divided, but one can say with confidence that the overwhelming majority of the people of South Sudan are committed to the cause of Abyei and that only a few individuals are against our cause. Some of those individuals are members of the 'kitchen cabinet' and are influencing some decisions of the government of South Sudan on Abyei. This is for example, the case with the dismissal of some officers and officials who hail from Abyei Area from the army, police and civil service.

There are of course factors that may influence support or opposition to the cause of Abyei. Some factors that influence support for the Abyei cause include: the economic importance of Abyei to Greater Bahr el Ghazal and Greater Unity State (for instance, at the time of writing, Amiet Market in Abyei Area is the lifeline of all those areas); the populace in Greater Bahr El Ghazal and Greater Unity State see the Ngok Dinka people of Abyei as their kith and kin and Abyei land as an extension of Dinka land; the active participation of

Ngok Dinka in all wars of liberation against the ruling elites in Khartoum; the legacy of the commitment of Cdr. Dr. John Garang and the support of some current leaders of South Sudan for the Abyei cause; Abyei lobby in South Sudan, the region and diaspora; and solidarity of some members of the international community with the Abyei cause.

Some of the factors that influence opposition of Abyei cause are the following: weak leadership of South Sudan, reflected in the fact that the current leadership of South Sudan has not been playing its cards correctly on the Abyei issue, which is now placed at the bottom of their priorities because of fear of the North and due to the civil war in the country; opportunism by a few individuals, particularly from Greater Bahr el Ghazal, who give negative messages on the Abyei cause, some of whom are also exerting negative influence in the leadership of South Sudan on the Abyei issue, and others may be conspiring with Khartoum against the Abyei cause, a few elements from Ngok Dinka of Abyei who are supporting Khartoum are encouraging the Missiriya and Khartoum to pursue their agenda on Abyei; disunity among the Ngok Dinka leadership in the South over the local leadership in Abyei Area is sending mixed signals to some Southerners and members of international community; Khartoum's subversive activities against the Abyei cause; and the civil war in South Sudan puts Abyei at the bottom of priorities of the international community.

While the support of the South for Abyei has generally been steadfast, there is a new trend to marginalise Abyei for reasons that may include the following: some leaders of the government of South Sudan have no capacity to differentiate between the community and their leaders, e.g. Ngok Dinka people of Abyei are being victimized for the refusal of Deng Alor Kuol to join the SPLM-in-Government Group; Bona Malual Madut Ring, full of prejudices from Kuac Twich village against the Ngok Dinka people and hatred of Garang's vision of New Sudan as a means for the liberation of ensuing South Sudan, took advantage of the differences and confusion in the SPLM party Leadership and succeeded to win some leaders to his side in the fight against the Ngok Dinka of Abyei, and holding the belief that the Ngok Dinka were highly committed to the leadership of Cdr. Dr. John Garang de Mabior he thus decided to continue to fight late Garang by victimizing the Ngok Dinka people; and finally, the last reason is the effect of Khartoum subversive activities in the government of South Sudan against the cause of Abyei. Khartoum has succeeded to infiltrate the government of South Sudan through the former members of the National Congress Party and their former intelligence operatives who are, at the time of this writing, in leading positions of the government of South Sudan, but remain committed to Khartoum.

It should be noted that while the people of Abyei are unequivocally South Sudanese, they recognise that the current status of Abyei Area is influenced by its history, economic importance and location along the border between Sudan and South Sudan. The border between Sudan and South Sudan from Ethiopia to Central Africa Republic is 2010 kilometers long. There are many crossing areas along that border, including Renk, Magenes, Kaka Altijaria, Pariang, Khirasana, Abyei, Wahr-Guet, Gong-Machar and Raja. However, Abyei Area was transferred from Bahr el Ghazal to Kordofan in March 1905 by the British colonial administration of the Sudan for administrative reasons, which had aimed at protecting the Dinka from Abyei and Twich areas from slave hunting attacks by Missiriya Arabs from Kordofan. There is no doubt that the border location of Abyei is influencing its current status like other disputed and claimed areas of Magenes, Khirasana, Mile-14 and Kafia Kenji.

Abyei is very rich with quality oil and other minerals, which the National Congress Party is exploiting for boosting their revenues. The oil exploration in Abyei Area and its proximity to Sudan are encouraging the North to control the area. The Missiriya Arabs, who are the northern neighbors of Ngok Dinka, are allowed to graze their livestock in the Abyei Area by the Abyei Protocol of May 2004 and through local agreements between the two communities. However, Khartoum regime misled the Missiriya to believe that their grazing rights will be threatened should Abyei Area become part of South Sudan. The unjustified fear by the Missiriya is another factor which is influencing the current status of Abyei Area. Therefore, the abundant resources in Abyei Area, its history of transfer to Kordofan, and location along the border contribute to Khartoum's motivation to claim control of the area.

From the broader perspective, four stakeholders in the Abyei issue are contributing to the current impasse on Abyei as elaborated below. The government of Sudan is the major cause of the impasse on Abyei since it is the one benefiting from the current status quo, taking all the revenues of quality oil being explored and produced in the Abyei Area. According to the Abyei Protocol of May 2004, the members of Ngok Dinka community and other Sudanese residing in the area are the ones to vote in the Abyei Referendum to determine the destiny of the area, either to retain its special administrative status in the North (Sudan) or be part of Bahr el Ghazal (South Sudan). Also, according to the Protocol, the criteria of residence are to be worked out by the Abyei Referendum Commission. As a way of creating impasse on the final status of the Abyei Area in order to maintain the status quo, Khartoum is insisting that the Missiriya Arab nomads be considered residents of the Abyei Area. This is a clear violation of the Abyei Protocol by the government of Sudan.

The Protocol defines the Abyei territory as the area of the nine Ngok Dinka chiefdoms transferred to Kordofan Province of Sudan in 1905 and asserts that the Missiriya and other nomadic peoples from South Sudan (Panarou Dinka, Alor Dinka, Nuer of Mayom, Twich Dinka, Rek Dinka of Gogrial, Rek Dinka of Awiel and Malual Dinka of Awiel) retain their traditional rights to graze their cattle and move across the territory of Abyei. It is worth noting that those traditional rights were regulated by traditional norms and mechanisms agreed upon between the Ngok Dinka chiefs and the chiefs of the concerned nomadic peoples. There is no way the nomadic Missiriya people can become residents of Abyei Area and therefore have the right of voting in the Abyei Referendum as Khartoum is now claiming. Therefore, by that unfounded and baseless claim, the government of Sudan aims at creating an impasse on Abyei status and continues to take all the revenues from the oil being explored and produced in the Abyei Area.

Khartoum is also the only source of insecurity in the Abyei Area. The so-called oil police (soldiers in police uniform), Missiriya militia and Twich militia under the command of Thomas Thiel, who hails from Twich Dinka, are always attacking the Ngok Dinka people in the return villages, killing innocent people, including women, children and the elderly, and looting their livestock and other properties, despite the protection of the Abyei Area by the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA). Khartoum's intention behind those attacks is to destabilize the area so that Ngok Dinka people do not return to their original villages in the north of the area within or near the oil fields. Khartoum is also against the revival of peaceful coexistence between Ngok Dinka and Missiriya Arabs and therefore sabotages any initiative by the chiefs of the two communities to that effect. Khartoum always attacks the Ngok Dinka whenever there is improvement in the relations between the two communities. Peaceful coexistence between the two communities is seen by the government of Sudan as a threat to its interests in the Abyei Area.

Of course, the problem is not only with Khartoum, as some influential South Sudanese are involved. As mentioned above, Bona Malual's intention towards the Abyei Area appears to be hostile as he has old personal grudges against the Ngok Dinka. Bona has dedicated his book, *Abyei of the Ngok Dinka: Not Yet South Sudan*, to his "Twich Mayardit community of Greater Gogrial district of Greater Bahr el Ghazal province of South Sudan." One may conclude from this that the dedication is to draw the attention of Twich community to his attack on Ngok Dinka of Abyei.

Bona Malual reconciled with Deng Alor, Pieng Deng and Luka Biong on the 27th February 2017 in the house of SPLA Maj. Gen. Kuol Deng-Abot Kuol in Juba. On the 28th February 2017, we met him in the house of Gen.

Pieng Deng Kuol in Juba to brainstorm on the way forward on the Abyei status. I drew Bona Malual's attention to the insecurity being created in the Abyei Area by Thomas Thiel who hails from Twich Dinka of Bona Malual. Bona was asked to help in neutralising the activities of Thiel militia in the Abyei Area. To the surprise of everyone in the meeting, he answered by blaming the SPLM's government for giving the rank of Lieutenant General to Nuer militia officers and denying it to Thomas Thiel. Bona's answer made me link him with Thiel militia group.

When Gen. Pieng was still the SPLA Deputy Chief of Staff for Administration in the SPLA General Headquarters, in 2012 he agreed with Thiel to reintegrate his militia into the SPLA. Some of his forces were in fact integrated, but Thiel suddenly declined to come to South Sudan due to the influence of a hidden person, whom we suspected to be no other than Bona Malual.

The second contributing factor in the current impasse on Abyei comprises influential elements in the leadership of the government of South Sudan. The main concern of the current leadership of South Sudan is to maintain political power in their fight against various rebel groups in different parts of the country. The leadership appears to be no longer pursuing the case of the disputed areas with the Sudan, including the final status of Abyei, in the regional and international forums. These days, whenever the issue of the disputed areas is raised to the leadership, it is said that South Sudan is not ready to fight the Sudan. The Ngok Dinka community and the South Sudan public opinion wanted the government of South Sudan to endorse the Abyei Area Community referendum of October 2013 in order to put pressure on the African Union and the United Nations for the final settlement of the Abyei status. Unfortunately, the leadership of South Sudan refused to endorse the results of the referendum, which they had mobilised the Ngok Dinka to conduct.

In January 2014, South Sudan Legislative Assembly made a motion to endorse the results, and the motion was highly supported by the members (more than 200 MPs registered their names in support of raising that motion in the Assembly of 332 members, while the minimum number required was 7 members only). However, the executive of the government of South Sudan intervened and ordered the Assembly to cancel the motion, fearing the reaction of Khartoum, which had already rejected the results of Abyei Community Referendum in December 2013. To the surprise of many South Sudanese, some ministers of the government of South Sudan went as far as saying that the results of Abyei Community Referendum will not be accepted by the governments of South Sudan and the national government of Sudan.

When Cdr. Dr. John Garang de Mabior died in a helicopter crash on Saturday, 30st July 2005, some individuals from Bahr el Ghazal celebrated his death and went on to say that the Abyei cause had died with him. Those individuals have been working tirelessly to betray the cause of Abyei. The three areas of Nuba Mountainss, Southern Blue Nile and Abyei had been excluded from the Machakos Protocol of July 2002 due to the lobby against those areas, including the 1994 Chukudum Agreement that was orchestrated by Bona Malual Madut to exclude the three areas. In 2004, Cdr Dr. John Garang de Mabior called for an urgent meeting of the SPLM/A Leadership Council in Naivasha to decide on the fate of the Abyei Area as Khartoum was insisting to exclude Abyei from the CPA. Some reliable sources affirmed that all the SPLM leaders from Bahr el Ghazal who attended that meeting abstained in the proposal to exclude Abyei Area from the CPA negotiations. Cdr. Dr. John Garang made the final decision that Abyei must be included in the CPA or there would be no peace agreement. That is how Abyei Area was brought back to the CPA after its exclusion in Machakos. I was in Naivasha at that time.

We were expecting our brothers from Bahr el Ghazal to support the cause of Abyei; unfortunately, that was not to be. The question we asked ourselves was: who had mobilised the members of the Leadership Council from Bahr el Ghazal to abstain? I leave the answer to the reader to guess. However, we found the answer to that question in Naivasha. A few individuals from Bahr el Ghazal were, at the time of this writing, working against the cause of Abyei.

The third set of contributors to the current impasse on Abyei includes the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), the African Union (AU) and the International Community. In 2004, there was an impasse on the Abyei issue during the peace talks in Naivasha, as Khartoum was refusing to include the three areas of Abyei, Nuba Mountainss and Southern Blue Nile in the CPA. The way out of that impasse was the proposal presented by the United States of America (USA). The guarantors of the CPA, including IGAD, AU and the International Community, have failed to exert effective pressure on Khartoum to implement the Abyei Protocol since the civil war started in South Sudan in 2013. The Office of Abyei File under the leadership of Justice Deng Biong Mijak has been working tirelessly so that the CPA grantors exert the necessary pressure on Khartoum and Juba to reach a final settlement on the Abyei issue, but the efforts of that Office have not been fruitful till the time of this writing. The Abyei File has been pushing the AU to forward the Abyei case to the UN Security Council, since there is no progress on the final settlement. However, the AU Commission has not acted up to the time of this writing. The United States, which initiated and promoted the Abyei Protocol of 2004, is also standing aloof, despite the fact that it has been called upon to come

to the rescue of the Ngok Dinka people of Abyei as they did during the first impasse of 2004. However, the government of the United States of America is delivering, at the time of this writing, much appreciated social services to the Ngok Dinka people of Abyei through USAID. IGAD has also distanced itself from the case of Abyei, whereas it was the mediator and the principal grantor of the CPA!

The fourth and the last contributor to the current impasse on Abyei is Ngok leadership. The Ngok Dinka people of Abyei conducted their community referendum on 30th October 2013 as a result of frustration, when the AU failed to conduct the agreed referendum in the area. The Conference of the Ngok Dinka of Abyei was held in Abyei town on the 18th October 2013, just before the community referendum. The Conference resolved that there should be no joint administration/organ with the Arabs in the Abyei Area, including the Abyei Joint Oversight Committee. However, in November 2013, the Abyei Area Community Referendum High Committee (AACRHC) met and Deng Mading Mijak was directed to adopt 'a low profile' on the activities of AJOC, which he was co-chairing. This means that AJOC was to exist but shouldn't be active. The Conference also mandated the AACRHC to be the highest political organ in the struggle for the Abyei cause. The Conference confirmed Deng Alor Kuol as the Chairman of the AACRHC, which consists of two components, one in Juba and the other in the Abyei Area. Some members of the AACRHC were assigned to lead operational and effective sub-committees on security, legal, administrative, organisational and economic affairs. Chol Deng Alak was selected by the members of the AACRHC to act as the Chairman when Deng Alor relocated to Nairobi, Kenya, after he was released from detention, following the events of 15th December 2013 in which many SPLM leaders, including Deng Alor, were arrested and detained, charged with allegations which were later found by the court of law to be baseless.

When Chol Deng Alak was appointed Chief Administrator (CA) of the Abyei Area Administration (AAA) in February 2015, he started to sabotage the work of AACRHC until the time of this writing. Chol Deng Alak has refused to hand over the Office of the Chairman of AACRHC to Deng Alor Kuol since he returned to Juba on the 1st June, 2015. Therefore, AACRHC, the highest political organ for the Abyei Area, has not been performing its tasks for the last two years. The Office of Abyei File led by Justice Deng Biong Mijak is the only authority, till the time of this writing, following up on issues to do with the case of Abyei. Another organ which is no long active is Abyei Community Committee in Juba. Deng Mading Mijak, the head of Juba AJOC, has been refusing to hand over the chairmanship of that committee for the last three years, after the duration of his term as the chairman of the community in Juba

had expired. It is very unfortunate that Ngok leadership is, at the time of this writing, bogged down in internal conflicts, instead of pursuing the settlement of the final status of the Abyei Area.

All this indicates that there is a genuine question on how united or divided the people of Abyei are on their cause. During the community referendum of 30th October 2013, 99.8% of Abyei residents voted that Abyei be part of Bahr el Ghazal. The results of the referendum showed that the majority of Ngok Dinka people of Abyei are united on the Abyei cause of re-joining South Sudan. Despite the fact that the community referendum was not recognised by Khartoum, the government of South Sudan, regional organisations, or the international community, the results sent a very clear message to the supporters and opponents of the Abyei cause that the Ngok Dinka people of Abyei want to re-join their kith and kin in the South.

However, there are very few Ngok Dinka people who want Abyei to remain in the North. Khartoum is making the voices of that small group very loud through intense media agitation and propaganda. Abyei leadership should work tirelessly to win back Khartoum supporters to the side of the majority of their people. Among the majority of Ngok Dinka people who support the Abyei cause, there are differences over the strategies and tactics for achieving the common objective. Difference of opinion is always natural in any community. However, it is the task of Abyei leadership to manage those differences so that they don't become antagonistic and hinder the achievement of the desired objective of Abyei in re-joining South Sudan.

Under the circumstances, the way forward over the current impasse on Abyei must start from the leadership of the Ngok Dinka, since the other stakeholders are bogged down by their own challenges. Abyei leadership should take the lead in pursuing the Abyei cause rather than depending entirely on the SPLM Party and the government of South Sudan. Abyei leaders should unite their ranks by quickly reconciling their differences and activate the Abyei Area Community Referendum High Committee, which was mandated by the Conference of Ngok Dinka that was convened in October 2013, to politically lead the community in the achievement of their objective of re-joining their kith and kin in South Sudan. Ngok leaders should organize their people wherever they are to work towards the achievement of their goals. The leaders should discuss and agree on the appropriate form of community organisation. The leaders must establish Abyei Cause Fund for the contribution of Ngok Dinka and their friends inside the Abyei Area, South Sudan, region and diaspora. The Fund should be used to promote the Abyei cause. With the help of the Abyei File Office, Ngok leaders should work out strategies, approaches and tactics for

pursuing the Abyei cause so that they are proactive instead of reactive to what the situation dictates on them.

Abyei lobby groups should be established in Juba, Europe and USA. The lobby should be intensified on the international community to use carrots and sticks on Khartoum and Juba to find a final settlement of the Abyei status. The lobby should also aim at soliciting support with basic social services; improving livelihood (economic activities); community cohesion, peace and reconciliation; and other recovery and stabilisation activities in the Abyei Area from the donor community.

There has been some talk about placing Abyei in a special status between Sudan and South Sudan. But, the Resolution of the Abyei Conflict of May 2004 (the Abyei Protocol of the CPA) calls for the residents of Abyei to vote on two options: that Abyei retain its special administrative status in the north or that Abyei be part of Bahr el Ghazal. The introduction of a new concept of Abyei special status between Sudan and South Sudan, which was not agreed in the CPA, will amount to the renegotiation of the CPA and abandoning all the agreements on Abyei between South Sudan and Sudan. Therefore, this new proposal is not plausible despite the immense suffering of Ngok Dinka of Abyei. Omer Al-Bashir was the one who proposed that idea in April 2017 during his meeting in Khartoum with Dr. Francis Mading Deng and Bona Malual. My fear is that, should Abyei leaders accept the new proposal, the few southern individuals who are against the Abyei cause may use the new proposal to mobilise our supporters in the South against the Abyei cause, and that will serve the interest of Khartoum.

Since the parties to the Abyei Protocol of the CPA have come to an irreconcilable impasse in their bilateral discussions, the role of the international community in the resolution of the conflict over Abyei becomes pivotal as the way out of the current impasse. The role of the international community is twofold. Firstly, it is to use carrots and sticks, when necessary, to exert pressure on the governments of Sudan and South Sudan and mediate between them so that they reach a final settlement on the status of the Abyei Area. The United States of America, the initiator of the Abyei Protocol of May 2004 and one of the grantors of the CPA, has a moral obligation to rally the international community for that noble task. The government of Sudan is now working hard to normalize its relations with the USA for economic reasons, amongst others. The US government can include the final settlement of the Abyei issue amongst the conditions which must be satisfied by the Sudan in order to agree on the normalisation process. Secondly, while pursuing the final settlement of the Abyei issue, the second role the international community should play is to

address immediately the suffering of the Ngok Dinka people of Abyei through facilitation of their return, and recovery and stabilization programmes.

Some of the urgent needs of the Abyei Area are the following: humanitarian assistance to the returning population and the host communities; basic social services, particularly education, health for humans and livestock, safe water and roads; improving livelihood by improving economic activities of the populace; and promoting community cohesion, peace building and reconciliation within and with neighbors. It is the responsibility of the leadership of the Ngok Dinka of Abyei to mobilise the international community to play the two roles.

As a central element in my final reflections on the Abyei situation, I would like to comment on some of the issues raised by Bona Malual in his book *Abyei of the Ngok Dinka: Not Yet South Sudan*. The first issue is his differences with Honorable Deng Alor Kuol, Dr. Luka Biong Deng and Gen. Pieng Deng Kuol. I was the Co-Master of Ceremonies for the meeting held on 27th February 2017 in the house of SPLA Major General Kuol Deng-Abot Kuol in Juba for reconciliation of the three comrades with Bona Malual Madut. The distinguished mediators found out that there were no big differences to warrant the conflict to the level of writing a book full of insults to the opponents and the community they hail from, the Ngok Dinka of Abyei. Malual himself admitted in the reconciliation meeting that he had never differed with Deng Alor and that his anger with him was that the meeting in which Dr. Luka Biong criticised Malual Madut was held in the house of Deng Alor in Nairobi in 1994. Bona Malual had been thinking that Deng Alor had conspired with Dr. Luka against him. Deng Alor denied any conspiracy against Malual and apologized if there had been misunderstanding against him.

Dr. Luka Biong Deng, with due respect to Bona, criticized Bona for excluding Abyei Area from the right of self-determination for South Sudan in his agreement of 1994 with Mubarak Al-Fadhil Al-Mahdi. The following is the full text of Luka's WhatsApp message read to the reconciliation meeting by Deng Biong Mijak:

Deng, my issue with Malual in 1994 was a genuine concern of a young brother to his elder brother for failing to include Abyei in the right of self-determination of South Sudan in a deal he concluded with Mubarak. Francis and Bol have been consistent to make us believe that Malual is a true brother. We were told that during his last moment when he was sick, our father was very particular for Mading and Bol to keep brotherly relations with Bona. It is on the basis of this brotherly feeling that I blamed Bona, but with respect. If my blame has been taken negatively and repetitively being brought up by Bona as disrespect, then my brotherly feeling was wrong and I sincerely apologize for overrating my relations with Bona and time has proven that. Since 1994, I have never uttered any statement in public against Bona, despite my serious

concerns about his attitude towards Abyei, simply because of respect for him as an elder and a brother.

General Pieng Deng Kuol was the deputy commander of the mission under the command of General Obuto Mamur Mete that was tasked by the SPLA General Headquarters in Juba to enlighten the SPLA soldiers in Greater Bahr el Ghazal and Greater Unity State, on their roles in the General Elections of April 2010 in the Sudan before the independence of South Sudan. Malual Madut was campaigning in Twich area for a seat in the national assembly of the Sudan. Bona Malual Madut stated in the reconciliation meeting that his grievance with General Pieng was that the General had mobilised the wounded heroes of the SPLA, who were based in Turalei, to kill Bona as he was not from the SPLM Party. Bona Malual also stated that the SPLA military convoy under the command of General Pieng was about to crash his vehicles when they met on the way between Turalei and Majak-Kol SPLA garrison. General Pieng replied that when they arrived to Turalei, he requested from General Obuto, the mission commander, to greet Bona Malual before they proceeded to Majak-Kol garrison. The convoy was informed that Bona had gone to his village of Molbang. General Pieng denied meeting with the wounded heroes in Turalei, let alone mobilising them to kill Bona. General Pieng also stated that on the way to Majak-Kol from Turalei, he had seen three vehicles on the other side of the road moving towards Turalei, but he had not noticed who were in the vehicles. However, he was told in Majak-Kol that Bona was in one of the three vehicles. He denied that their convoy was about to crash the vehicles of Bona Malual. Bona Malual should have directed his anger to Gen. Obuto Mamur, the mission commander, not to one of his subordinates. General Pieng concluded by offering apology to Bona for any inconveniences he might have caused.

There are no good reasons warranting Bona Malual to write a book bitterly against the three individuals. There must be other reasons, which Bona is shying away from mentioning to the people of South Sudan and the world at large. It is likely that Bona is on a subversive mission ordered by President Al-Bashir of the Sudan to sabotage the Abyei cause.

The second issue I want to comment on is the claim repeated several times by Bona Malual Madut in his book that the Ngok leaders from the family of Deng Majok Kuol Arop are foreigners and holding power illegitimately in South Sudan. That claim also applies to the whole community of those leaders, the Ngok Dinka people of Abyei. The claim is not true as the Abyei Protocol and the Transitional Constitution of the Republic of South Sudan, 2011, grant the right of citizenship and nationality of South Sudan to the Ngok Dinka people of Abyei. According to Abyei Protocol, article 1.2.1, "Residents of Abyei will

be citizens of both Western Kordofan and Bahr el Ghazal, with representation in the legislatures of both states”.

The same Protocol, article 1.4, says, “The January 1, 1956 line between north and south will be inviolate, except as agreed above.” (In the Abyei Protocol). The Transitional Constitution of the Republic of South Sudan of 2011, Article 97 (4) (a), says, “The members of the nine Ngok Dinka Chiefdoms of Abyei Area shall have an inalienable right to enjoy South Sudanese citizenship and nationality and all rights and freedoms guaranteed by this constitution.”

Many Ngok Dinka of Abyei, who are now residing in South Sudan, would have left long ago if they were staying at the mercy of people like Bona Malual and not on the basis of their constitutional right. The Ngok Dinka people of Abyei are South Sudanese and their area is currently under shared sovereignty between the Republic of South Sudan and the Republic of Sudan. The Status of Force Agreement (SOFA) of the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA) concluded by the UN, South Sudan, and Sudan, was on the basis of the shared sovereignty of the Abyei between the two member States of the UN. The shared sovereignty over the Abyei Area will continue till the people of the area choose the country to which they want to belong. Therefore, the title of Bona’s book, *Abyei of the Ngok Dinka: Not Yet South Sudan*, does not accurately describe the current status of the Abyei Area.

The third issue I want to comment on relates to the false claims by Bona Malual on pages 3 - 6 of his book, that “Chief Arop Biong decided to seek colonial authority approval to have his people treated as part of Kordofan province”; that “Central to the original British colonial decision to annex the Abyei Area to Kordofan was the issue of livestock grazing and water for the Missiriya Arabs”; and that “the leaders and elders of Kuac Anganya decided against joining the Ngok and being administered as part of Kordofan, therefore becoming Northern Sudanese.” Malual did not quote any historical document to support his claims. I was one of the researchers on Abyei from the side of South Sudan in The Hague Arbitration on Abyei Area. The historical truth is that both Twich Dinka and Ngok Dinka were transferred on the same day of March 1905 to Kordofan and the reason of the transfer of the two sections to Kordofan was slave raids by the Missiriya Arabs on both Twich Dinka and Ngok Dinka.

The reason of the transfer was not to give grazing land to the Baggara as Bona is claiming in his book. What had happened was that in January 1905, twenty-two Twich Dinka boys who were fishing were captured as slaves by the Missiriya Arabs of Ali Jula. So, the Twich chief Rehan Gor-Kuei went and complained to the British administration in Toufekia (currently Doleb) to the south of Malakal. From there he was taken to the Governor General in

Khartoum, because the Missiriya Arabs were under Kordofan and not Upper Nile. The British Governor General called the meeting of the Governors of Kordofan to which Missiriya belonged and the Governor of Bahr el Ghazal to which Twich Dinka and Ngok Dinka belonged. The transfer of the two sections was decided in the presence of Twich chief Rehan Gor-Kuei. Chief Arop Biong had not requested his transfer to Kordofan as Bona claims in his book.

The reasons for the transfer are clearly stated in the Sudan Intelligence Reports. The 1905 Intelligence Report of the Condominium administration states,

It has been decided that Sultan Rob (Arob), whose country is on Kiir river, and Sheikh Rihan of Toj (Twich), mentioned in the last Intelligence Report, are to belong to Kordofan Province. These people have, on certain occasions, complained of raids made to them by Southern Kordofan Arabs, and it has therefore been considered advisable to place them under the same Governor as the Arabs of whose conduct they complain. (Sudan Intelligence Report, No. 128, March, 1905:3).

The 1905 Kordofan Province Annual Report records, "The Dinka Sheikhs, Sultan Rob and Sultan Rihan Gorkwei are now included in Kordofan instead of the Bahr el Ghazal" (Kordofan Province Annual Report, 1905:111). And the Acting Governor of Bahr el Ghazal, W.F. Sweng, had recorded the same year, "in the north the territories of Sultan Arob and Sheikh (Rihan) Gorkwei have been taken from this province (Bahr el Ghazal) and added to Kordofan" (Reports on the Finance, Administration and Condition of the Sudan, 1905:3).

Ruweng Dinka people (Panarou) were part of Kordofan when the British administration established the first provinces for the Sudan. However, in 1926, the Ruweng Dinka were transferred to Upper Nile Province, then re-transferred to Kordofan in 1928, and finally re-transferred to Upper Nile in 1931. The Twich Dinka had been re-transferred to Bahr El Ghazal Province before 1931. (SMR1 [1929]: 1; SMR2 [1929]: 5; SMR24 [1930-1]: 7). In 1930s Ngok Dinka chief Kuol Arop was offered the choice of being incorporated into Bahr al-Ghazal. Kuol opted to remain in Kordofan for the reasons of protection from the Baggara (Francis Deng, 1986: 50).

Throughout the 1930s and the 1940s, there was a general trend of amalgamation of Missiriya, bringing the two Humr sections (Agaira and Fellaita) together with Zurg under Ali Jula's grandson, Babo Nimr as Nazir Umum (paramount chief). The Ngok remained a separate unit under the Paramount Chief Kuol Arop, and then his son, Deng Majok. (James Robertson, 1974: 52). Deng Majok retained his own autonomy and refused to be treated as one of Babo Nimr's subordinate chiefs. After independence, the Ngok felt that they

were being marginalised in the Missiriya Rural Council affairs and Deng Majok requested that the Ngok be allowed to form their own rural council, but this was refused. (Deng, 1973: 55-6, 59; 1986: 231). When the Missiriya Rural Council was established in 1953, the Missiriya chiefs denied Abyei Area to be part of the newly established council. The then-British colonial administrator decided to retain Abyei Area as an independent unit within the established council in Rej el Fula. The post of Assistant Executive Officer was created to cater for the administration of Abyei Area and became answerable to the District Commissioner, unlike the other Assistant Executive Officers for Lagawa and Missiriya, who were answerable to the Chief Executive Officer, who was in turn answerable to the District Commissioner (Michael Tibbs, 2002).

Those historical documents are there in the library of Oxford University and Bona should give himself a little time, since his residence is in Oxford City, and write the true history of his community, the Twich Dinka, rather than write unfounded and baseless information about Ngok Dinka of Abyei.

The fourth issue I want to comment on is the allegation by Bona Malual that the International Court of Arbitration on Abyei in The Hague had ruled that Heglig belonged to Sudan. Heglig was not mentioned in the Court decision and Bona Malual is only attempting to mislead our brothers and sisters in Ruweng State in particular and the people of South Sudan in general. According to Bona on page 106 of his book, "The international Court of Arbitration, after considering the evidence presented by the Ngok leaders of the SPLM, ruled that Heglig belonged to the North and not to Abyei." The Court had ruled that the eastern limit of the Ngok Dinka territory is Longitude 29° East. Heglig was not mentioned. Heglig is to the east of Long. 29° East, meaning that it does not belong to Abyei Area. The following is the full text of the Court decision on the eastern and western boundaries of the Abyei Area on the 22nd July 2010 (The American Journal of International Law, 2010, Vol. 104, pp.71-72):

Having concluded that the Experts reasoning was sufficient with respect to the southern boundary of the Abyei Area and have retained the sufficiently reasoned northern limit of the area of permanent Ngok Dinka habitation at 10°10' N as the new northern boundary of the Abyei Area, the tribunal was left to (re)delimit only the eastern and western boundaries. In doing so the tribunal maintained the Experts "tribal interpretation" of the mandate (para. 710) and relied on the best available evidence for the eastern and western limits of the Ngok Dinka chiefdoms transferred in 1905. Among this evidence was a document by Paul Howell, a British district commissioner and anthropologist that identified the western and eastern limits of the Ngok Dinka at "approximately Long. 27°50' E and Long. 29° E (para. 721, quoting Howell). Other evidence corroborated Howell's western and eastern limits,

and the tribunal adopted these lines of longitude as the western and eastern boundaries of the Abyei Area.

It is very clear that there was no mention of Heglig in the ruling. The tribunal was tasked to delimit the boundaries of the Abyei Area and Heglig is outside that area. Whether Heglig is part of Sudan or South Sudan was none of their business. On the 23rd July 2010, Aldirdeiry Mohammed Ahmed, who had led the Missiriya Arabs in the Abyei Arbitration in The Hague, was about to be killed by the Missiriya Arabs for losing the case. So, Aldirdeiry rushed to the media and concocted the story that the Court had ruled that Heglig belonged to the North and not to Abyei. Bona Malual has just copied that unfounded and baseless story in his book.

During the testimonies of the Abyei Boundaries Commission (ABC) of 2005, Achak chiefdom, which is one of the nine chiefdoms of Ngok Dinka, presented Miding (Heglig) as one of their grazing areas (Toc in Dinka language) before the 1965 crisis between Ngok Dinka and Missiriya. Some sections of Achak chiefdom used to graze their cattle in Miding area together with sections from Alor Dinka, Panarou Dinka and Nuer. In addition, the traditional/administrative boundaries before and after 1974, when a decree was passed to administer Abyei Area from the Office of the President of the Sudan, still stand as they were. The following are the boundaries of Ngok-Dinka with their neighbor, the Missiriya and Nuba to the North: Jiekdi, Kol-cuei, Mabior, Kolcum, Dhuny-dhuol, Thur, Ruba, Nyin-thau (north of Nyama), Thuba, Rumlukuk, Kuok, Aniak, Miding, Miyen-Gier, Mardhuk and Panthuor. The claim of Achak chiefdom to Heglig area is supported by some historical sources which trace the routes of migration of Ngok Dinka to Abyei Area.

The following are some of those sources (The SPLM Final Presentation on the Boundaries of the Abyei Area, 2005, p.4): "The nine chiefdoms of the Ngok Dinka of Abyei Area are part of the larger group of Dinka known as Padang" (K.D.D. Henderson, *A Note on the Migration of the Missiriya Tribe into South West Kordofan*, p.57). "The Ngok Dinka first crossed the River Nile and settled at River Ngol in 1710" (Stephanie Beswick, *The Ngok*, 1998, p.xix). "The Dinka migration split at Bor, and the main body (Rek, Malual, etc.) moved Northwest, while the remainder followed the Nile northward, and split again at Malakal, one party following the east bank to Renk and the other moving west of the Shilluk through Wonkai" (K.D.D. Henderson, *A Note on the Migration of the Missiriya Tribe into South West Kordofan*, p.57). Stefano Santandrea wrote about the arrival and settlement of Ngok Dinka in Abyei Area as follows: "The first Ngok Dinka chief who crossed the River Nile was Kuol-dit who settled along River Ngol with his son Monydhang. Both died and were buried on the bank of River Ngol at Dakjur (Damboloya)" (Stefano Santandrea, *The*

Luo of the Bahr el Ghazal, p.195). "Chief Alor Monydang pushed further on, invading the territory of the Begi or Girma and arrived as far as Abyei. He died and was buried at Barajak near River Ngol. His son Biong settled at Wun-cuei Southwest of Abyei, where he died and was buried" (The same source, p.196). "Chief Arop Biong shifted his headquarters to Mirok where he died and was buried" (The same source, p.196). It is noteworthy that all Ngok Dinka chiefs died and were buried north of the River Kiir (Bahr al-Arab).

When the ABC took the testimonies of Ngok Dinka southern neighbors of Panarou, Alor, Twich, Awan-Chan, Abiem, and Malual, there was complete understanding among the chiefs of these Dinka sections. Their concern was how to take Abyei away from Kordofan; they considered the boundaries between their areas as a purely internal problem, which can be tackled amicably once Abyei is in South Sudan. In 2005, the Governor of Unity State, Brig. Gen. Taban Deng Gai, was told by a resource historian that the only hope to bring Heglig back to South Sudan was through Abyei Area. In summary, Heglig was decided to be outside the Abyei box; whether it is in Sudan or South Sudan is to be decided by arbitration in the future. Bona Malual needs to find relevant historical documents to support South Sudan case from the archives in the United Kingdom.

The fifth issue I want to comment on is the unprofessional way in which Bona Malual wrote the book, which contains much repetition and inaccurate information. Bona Malual at the Preface of his book writes, "... this account of events that relate to the Ngok Dinka of Southern Kordofan in the Republic of Sudan (Northern Sudan) is a personal narrative. It is not a work that has arisen from academic or intellectual research, but describes events that I witnessed firsthand." How could Bona Malual write about the events in 1905, before his father and he were born, and consider them as events that he witnessed firsthand? The right thing he should have done was to back up his arguments with supportive historical documents. The book is biased and full of Bona's prejudices against the Ngok Dinka people of Abyei.

Bona Malual seems to have never read the Abyei Protocol of May 2004. He stresses on page 181 of his book, "... the Arabs need to be reassured by all sides that whatever the decision of the Ngok Dinka in their referendum they will always have grazing and watering rights at the River Kiir. The Abyei Protocol is not clear on this." To the contrary, the Abyei Protocol, sub-article 1.1.3, is very clear on that issue. The Protocol states in section 1.1.1: "Abyei is a bridge between the north and the south, linking the people of Sudan." In section 1.1.2 it states: "The territory is defined as the area of the nine Ngok Dinka chiefdoms transferred to Kordofan in 1905." And section 1.1.3

specifically provides: "The Missiriya and other nomadic peoples retain their traditional rights to graze cattle and move across the territory of Abyei."

Bona Malual is not accurate when he alleges on page 100,

...when the Twich Mayardit community has a problem, the Ngok people of Abyei take advantage of that, and even use it to place pressure on Twich ... I heard from someone who bought at Noong a container of grain that will not last a family of three for a month for more than 2,500 South Sudanese pounds, approximately US\$50. The new administration of Abyei then taxed this grain exorbitantly, so the Twich Mayardit family had to pay US\$25 [50%] for only US\$50 worth of grain. And to whom do these heavy taxes go?

When I read that allegation on the 31st May 2017, I immediately contacted Honourable Malony Tong Ngor, the Minister of Finance of the Abyei Area Administration, who is in charge of Abyei taxation department, inquiring about the allegation. Malony described the allegation as baseless. The following is the full text of his response:

Thank you so much General Kuol Deim Kuol for raising this issue. I remember uncle Bona raised this issue in our meeting with him in the house of General Pieng. My response to him was that this information was false. I denied the allegation of heavily taxing other communities who are not Ngok Dinka of Abyei and asked for the proof to substantiate that claim. I told the reality to the attendants of the meeting that we have never taxed more than 1.5% (only one and half per cent) for all traders from Abyei or any other state. I also told him in the meeting that I have information that more than that is taxed in other states. Again, I met Bona for the second time in the presence of the Governor of Twich State and his Finance Minister and I reiterated my point of view which I said in the earlier meeting and the two agreed with what I said. I also asked Twich Minister of Finance if he has information of Abyei heavily levying taxes on Twich people, and he said there was nothing of that kind. I am quite sure that uncle Bona knew the truth of our taxation before writing his book.

It was wrong for Bona Malual to write on an issue before inquiring thoroughly about it. What he wrongly wrote may incite some elements in his community against the innocent Ngok Dinka people of Abyei. Bona Malual is also not accurate when he claims on page 16, "The River Kiir crosses the whole of Twich Mayardit, from west to east"; on page 101, "The Twich Mayardit community is, of course, bitter because the administration of the Ngok Dinka at Aneet is not only appointed by the government in Juba, but also that Aneet is Twich Mayardit territory"; on page 104, "That is also why, no matter how loud a noise Edward Dut Lino Wour Abyei may make that he represents Abyei, the Abyei people will never allow him to represent their interest anywhere, because he simply is not one of them"; and on page 6, "Chief Wundit Madut Ring was

an intelligence officer in the SPLA under the command of General Daniel Awet Akot, who was gracious enough to release him so he could take over the chiefdom.”

All this information is not accurate. Firstly, what passes from the west to east of the southern part of Twich territory is River Lol, not River Kiir. The road-distance from River Kiir to northern boundaries of Twich territory (the 1956 border line between Kordofan and Bahr el Ghazal, which is at Latitude 9o 20’30” N) is between 34 to 41 kilometers. Bona may well be the mastermind of an explosive belief held by a few individuals from the old Gogrial District that ‘the southern bank of River Kiir is Twich territory, the northern bank belongs to Missiriyia and Ngok place is inside the river, since it is a type of fish’. What a reckless and irresponsible statement! Why beat the drums of war? Secondly, Aneet (Agok) is to the north of Latitude 9o20’30” N and is 100% within the territory of the Ngok Dinka Chiefdom transferred to Kordofan in 1905 as ruled by the Court of Arbitration in The Hague on the 22nd July 2010. In a meeting held in Aweng village of Twich State in April 2016, Twich elders, Bol Majok Adiang and Dut Bol Kur challenged Bona Malual and held him and late Justin Yac Arop as responsible for spoiling good neighbourly relations between Twich Dinka and Ngok Dinka communities.

Who is Bona Malual to label Mr. X as Ngok Dinka and Mr. Y as not Ngok Dinka? The veteran politician and freedom fighter Edward Dut Lino Wour Abyei is one of the highly respected sons and daughters of Ngok Dinka people of Abyei and that is why he was appointed the first Chief Administrator of the Abyei Area Administration after the signing of the CPA in 2005. Ngok Dinka consider it as ‘bad manners’ when a member of Ngok Dinka community tries to trace the origin of another member of the community. Any human being is welcomed to be a member of Ngok Dinka community by joining one of the nine Ngok Dinka chiefdoms. He or she is also welcomed to stay in Ngok land as Thai (Twich, Rek and Malual Dinka), Ruweng Dinka, Nuer, Jur-col, Duor (Balanda, people of Raga and Equatorians), Dhong (Nuba), Fur, Fallata, Jur (Arab) or Khwaja (white person).

Chief Wundit Madut Ring was not an SPLA officer when he was appointed chief of Kuac Twich Dinka. He was a military intelligence informant (locally trained in the SPLA by a professionally trained intelligence officer) with the Non-Commissioned Officer (NCO) rank of Sergeant Major (SM) in the 5th Company of Tweektwek Battalion under the command of Lt. Col. Daniel Awet Akot Thouw. SM. Wundit Madut was in the 5th Company which was under the direct command of 1st Lt. Deng Rockdit Miyar. 1st Lt. (Justice) Deng Arop Kuol Arop Biong was the Battalion Judicial Officer and 1st Lt. Mading Deng-Abot Kuol Arop Biong was the Battalion Political Officer.

In 1986, when Twektwek defeated the Arab militia (Muraheleen), ousting them from most of the areas of northern Bahr el Ghazal, Lt. Col. Awet was directed by the SPLA GHQs to re-organise the administration within his area of command in northern Bahr el Ghazal, including the court system in the area. Before the re-organisation was directed by the SPLA, Kuac Twich Dinka was one of the sub-chiefdoms of Akuar chiefdom of Paramount Chief Madhol Lang Juuk. During the reorganisation, Kuac Twich Dinka presented their genuine claim (on the basis of criteria set for a chiefdom) for a separate chiefdom from that of Akuar chiefdom and their claim was approved by the area command. 1st Lt. Deng Arop and 1st Lt. Mading Deng were given the reorganisation task. Therefore, 1st Lt. Deng Arop was directed by Lt. Col. Awet to move to Kuac area and supervise the election of the chief for the new chiefdom. SM. Wundit Madut became an officer when the chief in northern Bahr el Ghazal were commissioned as officers, in a separate list of the SPLA officers, as a way of empowering the chiefs when the society was becoming militarized as a means of defending themselves against the attacks by the Arab militia from northern Sudan.

The last issue I want to comment on is Bona Mahual's 'slave redemption programme' in Wunrok Adiang of Twich Mayardit, which was a scheme for obtaining US dollars through Christian Solidarity International (CSI). According to Bona page 122 of his book:

The Swiss-based Christian Solidarity International (CSI) picked up on the enslavement of South Sudanese during the war. They raised funding around Europe and North America and started a slave redemption programme in South Sudan, in which they organized slave redemption trips to Bahr el Ghazal, and paid the Baggara Arab militia in Sudanese pounds to redeem the slaves. They then exchanged this slave redemption hard currency from US dollars into Sudanese pounds with the SPLA local commanders. On their part, the SPLA, now under the leadership of Salva Kiir Mayardit, used the funds to arm and supply themselves. In no time, the SPLA in Bahr el Ghazal managed to repulse any Arab militia attacks in Bahr el Ghazal and pacified the area. Politically and militarily, this was not good news for Colonel Garang and his clique.

What was happening in Wunrok Adiang was completely different from what Bona wrote. There were only two sources of weapons and ammunition for the SPLA during the liberation war: the SPLA General Headquarters (friendly support abroad) and what was captured from the enemy in the battle fields. As I was the SPLA Chief Political Commissar from 1988 to 2010, I was receiving regular reports on daily basis from all units of the SPLA, including from the units in Bahr el Ghazal. There were never weapons and ammunition bought by the command in Bahr el Ghazal as alleged by Bona. In addition, to the best of

my knowledge, no slaves were redeemed as a result of Bona's programme, and it would have been unacceptable to the SPLA to reward slave traders for their crimes.

The real story went on like this, as was reported to me by Political Commissars from northern Bahr el Ghazal: When Bona was about to leave from Nairobi with his group for Wunrok, one SPLA officer, code-named Alpha Tango, moved to one of the villages to the north of Wunrok to join the agreed number of children and women collected from the nearby Dinka villages. When Bona and the group arrived in Wunrok, Alpha Tango would come to Wunrok in the morning of the second day with the children and women. What we learned was that a quarter of the total amount brought for that trip was left for the SPLA and local civil administration, and the group would go back to Nairobi with three quarters of the total amount. When Baroness Cox of the CSI realized what was going on, she stopped going to Wunrok, and Bona Malual continued the operation with John Eibner till Cdr. Dr. John Garang de Mabior issued strong orders in 1999 stopping the so-called slave redemption programme in north Bahr el Ghazal. That is a much different truth than depicted by Bona Malual.

Chapter Five:

From the Classroom to the Frontline

Pieng Deng Kuol

I was between 22 and 23 years old when I joined the SPLM/A. I did not join as an individual, but as part of Anya-Nya II from Bahr el Ghazal. I was among those individuals who started rebellion in Bahr el Ghazal in 1982. Several factors triggered my rebellion. The first was the General mistreatment and killings of our Ngok people by the government of the Sudan and the Missiriya Arabs. The political climate in the country reflected a general discontent of the Southerners against government policies toward the South. A major aspect of this was the government's dishonoring of the Addis Ababa Agreement. This was specifically demonstrated by the division of the South into three regions. There was also the imposition of Islamic Sharia law to the whole country, including the South.

I was in an underground movement called South Sudan Liberation Front (SSLF), which was operating through secret cells in South Sudan in general, including in universities, senior secondary schools, and military units. We also made a collective decision to rebel after the closure of the universities in late 1981. Comrade Pagan Amum and I from Khartoum University, Lukornyang Ladu and Nyachegak Nyachelok from the Khartoum Branch of Cairo

University, and students from secondary schools and the army, were among the first to join the rebellion in the South in 1982.

In Anya-Nya II, I was initially recruited as a non-commissioned officer, but I was nevertheless shown great respect by the command and colleagues from other ranks. I played mostly an advisory role, including in political orientation. When we joined the SPLA, I was commissioned as 1st Lt in 1984, after completing the first SPLA officers training (Shield One). In 1985, I was promoted to the rank of Captain, together with other comrades of the first SPLA units of Battalions 104 & 105, and Jamus. I was then sent to Cuba with 52 other officers to attend a special training in Guerrilla warfare and military science.

From 1986 to 1987, I was posted as Chief of Bilpam Training Center. Between 1987 and 1989, I was Chairperson of Panyido Refugees Camp, where I took care of more than 20,000 non-accompanied children (Jeish el Ahmar or Red Army), many of whom were later resettled in the United States and became popularly known as the Lost Boys and Girls. Under my care, together with the children were also many families of freedom fighters. In 1989, I was promoted to the rank of Alternate Commander (A/Cdr) as a reward for what I had done for the Red Army (Jeish el Ahmar). In 1992, I was promoted to the rank of full Commander (Cdr) with Comrade George Athor. His promotion was in recognition of the role he had played in resisting Riek Machar's 1991 rebellion in upper Nile. Mine was for the role I had played during our resistance against the advance of the enemy forces to Eastern Equatoria. Between 1989 and 1991, I commanded an area South of Juba between Juba-Yei Road and Juba-Nimule Road up to the Ugandan border. From 1991 to 1992, I served as Chief of Operations for the Bright Star Campaign phase one, which was controlling an area between the Nile and the borders with Uganda, Kenya and Ethiopia and the River Sobat. In 1992, I was one of the commanding officers who attacked Juba town. Between 1992 and 1993, I commanded the operations that flushed out Riek Machar's forces from Eastern Equatoria. I was the Commander of Eastern Torit and Western Kapoeta, where the first SPLM Convention and the first SPLA's Officers Conference were held in 1994 and 1995 respectively. I participated in most of the military operations that attempted to regain the strength of the SPLA between 1991 and 1995, after the Nasir Riek/Lam split and the Sudan government takeover of most of the liberated areas. In 1995, we began to recapture areas from the enemy, including Pajok, Magwi, Pageri and others.

After the Officers' Conference in 1995, I was appointed as the SPLA First Division Commander, which was deployed to Bahr el Ghazal. I moved to Bahr el Ghazal in 1996 for only two months, and was ordered to go and stop the

enemy's advance from Juba to Western Equatoria. In 1997, I was one of the commanding officers in the SPLA Operation Thunder Bolt (OTB), Operation Deng Nhial (ODN), and Operation Final Lap (OFL) that liberated all Yei areas, Western Juba areas, Eastern Mundri, Rumbek, Tonj, Warrap, Yirol, Tali, and areas west of Terekeka.

In 1998, I was sent back to Bahr el Ghazal to receive Kerebino Kwanyin when he was planning to defect from Khartoum and rejoin the Movement. From 1998 to 2000, I was chief of Operations for the whole of Bahr el Ghazal SPLA's Sector. From 2000 to 2001, I commanded the Raja Operations that captured the whole of Raja territory up to 18 miles west of Wau town. From 2002 to 2005, I commanded the Bahr el Ghazal sector. Between 2003 and 2005, I was also a member of the security team in the peace negotiations that concluded the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA).

I was made Major General when our ranks were converted into conventional ranks in 2005, immediately after the signing of the CPA. I was appointed as SPLA Director of Operations, member of the Ceasefire Political Commission (CPC), and member of the Joint Defence Board (JDB). In 2006, I was among the three (with late Samson Kwaje and John Luk), who represented GOSS in the negotiations with other armed groups that resulted in the Juba Declaration. I was promoted to Lt. General in 2010 and appointed as SPLA Deputy Chief of General Staff for Administration. Finally, I was promoted in 2013 to full General and appointed as South Sudan National Police Service Inspector General.

Although the cause of Abyei was a major factor in my rebelling, I never felt even once that there was any difference between me and other Southern Sudanese in the struggle. And I can say that this was also the case with all other comrades from Abyei in the struggle. We all felt that we were patriots like other Southerners and equally committed to the cause of our people of South Sudan. If anything distinguished the sons and daughters of Abyei in the Movement, it was their demonstrated bravery and commitment to the struggle. They were the most disciplined in the units.

Our conviction was that we were Southerners, and that it was only our land, not the people, that the Northerners claimed and wanted to take, as they had indeed taken other areas from the South. I must also say that most, if not all, the SPLM/A members did not at any time make any son or daughter of Abyei feel foreign to the South. It was only when the negotiations started that we became concerned about the fate of our area. This was due to the emergence of some elements who were not necessarily members of the Movement. It was they who began to make us feel discriminated.

It was because of the prominent role played by the sons and daughters of Abyei in the struggle that some people, who were for one reason or another antagonistic toward us, began to allege that Abyei dominated the SPLM/A. That reaction was largely out of jealousy. The name of Abyei appeared in the early war songs of the SPLM/A. The sons of Abyei (Michael Miokol Deng) led Bahr el Ghazal rebellion and the Muor-Muor group into the SPLM/A. The sons of Abyei were one-third of the Second Battalion (Jamus) of the SPLA. Bagat Aguek of Abyei was the first who came with a big force to the SPLM/A after Bor and Ayod rebellions.

Many educated sons of Abyei joined the struggle and the SPLM/A commissioned some of them as officers after their training. Most of Abyei soldiers never deserted their assignments. Leaders at all levels were always happy with the people of Abyei in their respective units because of their bravery, commitment and discipline. How could Abyei dominate the SPLM/A when there was no High Command member from Abyei at the time? Whatever influence the people of Abyei had was due to their field performances.

Capt. Deng Alor was a second political Commissar in the first combat and mobilization mission to Bahr el Ghazal. Sgt. Kuol Deng (Kuol Biting) was in military Intelligence in the same mission. After he was wounded, Capt. Deng Alor and Sgt. Kuol Biting went back to Ethiopia with their unit. Capt. Deng Alor was reassigned to Bilpam (GHQS) and then to SPLM/A Office in Addis Ababa, where he excelled in discharging his duties. He was trusted not only by Dr. John, but also by all the wounded heroes and the sick who went there for medical treatment. Sgt. Kuol Biting distinguished himself in Itang (Refugee camp). He was respected by many people in the camp and admired for his humble treatment of the people. In their various assignments, the officers from Abyei distinguished themselves. Capt. Chol Deng Alak was first appointed commander of a Company in Tamsaha Battalion, then became Commander of Cadets (officers) Training Center.

There, he was coincidentally joined by 1st. Lt. Kuol Deng (Kuol Suuk) and 1st Lt. Wor Jook. They were selected by the Ethiopian instructors without knowing where they come from. Because of his good performance, Capt. Kuol Deim was given the task of running SPLM/A Political and Moral Orientation Staff Branch. He was the one who led the defense of Boma.

The areas in which the officers from Abyei played prominent roles were quite varied. 1st. Lt. Dr. Luka Biong was a junior staff in Western Equatoria combat operation, which liberated the whole of Western Equatoria. He was subsequently assigned to the SRRA and later established the New Sudan Center for Statistics. Lt. Mijak Miyen, who was first in his batch of the intelligence unit, was known as one of the most intelligent SPLA officers in his group. Lt. Arop

(Arop Haroun) Deng, who managed to learn Ethiopian Language (which he could write and read) while at the Ethiopian border, was tasked to reestablish cooperation relations with the new government of Ethiopia in the 1990s, which he successfully did. Capt. Deng Aar was one of the best intelligence officers, and later successfully managed PABSANT Transporting Company, that supported most of the combat operations in Sector One.

These are only a few examples of the many sons of Abyei who positively influenced SPLM/A missions. People use the wrong word when they speak of domination. They could say that the people of Abyei were very effective and influential during the SPLM/A struggle and also in Anya-Nya I. This is because of their commitment and efficiency. Most of the people of Abyei were trusted by their commanders or leaders at all levels. At the founding phases of the SPLM/A, people of Abyei played a very recognizable role, as demonstrated by Deng Alor, Chol Deng Alak, and Kuol Biting. The sons of Abyei also played a leading role in the formation of Anya-Nya II in Bahr el Ghazal, represented by Luk Yowe and Michael Miokol Deng and the early arrival of Bagat Aguek with more than 700 fighters to join the SPLM/A in 1983.

In combat, many sons of Abyei played very effective roles in critical missions during mobilization, survival, and victory phases. A/Cdr Kuol Deim defended Boma as the only location which never changed hands since it was liberated in 1985. In recognition of that victory, the smallest unit of South Sudan Administration is now called Boma. And I, A/Cdr and Cdr Pieng Deng, did participate in most, if not all, SPLM/A survival and victory battles in the 1990s. Other sons of Abyei played their roles effectively at different fronts.

With respect to SPLM political and diplomatic missions, Deng Alor was one of the most trusted by the leadership, and Arop Haroun played a very important role in 1990s in improving relations between the Movement and the Ethiopian government. That resulted in the major support the Movement received from Ethiopia, and which made the SPLM/A recapture Pajok, Magwi and Pageri. These Operations restored the morale and strength of the movement in 1995. This also facilitated the capturing of Yei areas, the whole of Western Juba and most of Bahr el Ghazal in 1997. In negotiations, Deng Alor was always a member of the Movement's delegation. In the last peace negotiation at Naivasha, Deng Alor was one of the leading members. Dr. Luka Biong Deng was a very effective member of the technical team that drafted the agreements and I, Cdr. Pieng Deng, was a member of military team. Dr. Francis Mading Deng played an essential role in influencing USA policies and efforts in support of the negotiations.

Also unfounded is the similar assertion by our opponents that Abyei dominated the government of South Sudan. As noted earlier, there was in GOSS

only one Minister from Abyei; that was Dr. Luka Biong Deng. As minister in the Office of the President, he tried to establish a system and organized procedures for the Ministry. This was disliked by those who wanted to influence the President's decisions. I am sure those who were disadvantaged by the good system Luka established were the ones who talked of domination. Deng Alor was in the national government and not GOSS, but those alleged domination, maybe thinking of his position as a member of SPLM political bureau and the role he played in preventing the same elements who were desperately trying to interfere with the SPLM running of the affairs of South Sudan as mandated by the CPA. SPLM leadership resisted the efforts of the enemies of the Movement to influence Salva Kiir against the SPLM. They therefore accused Deng Alor and Dr. Luka as the power that prevented them from controlling or influencing Salva Kiir.

But apart from these exceptions, we are quite confident that South Sudanese are generally very committed to the cause of Abyei. I do not have the slightest doubt about the commitment of South Sudanese to the cause of Abyei. Dr. John and the entire SPLM/A were committed to the cause of Abyei during the struggle, which was demonstrated by the equal treatment given to the people of Abyei in the Movement. The same was true of the other members of the Movement and the people of South Sudan in the liberated areas, who treated the people of Abyei equally with the rest of SPLM/A. Every SPLA soldier was committed to fight for Abyei if the case of Abyei was not resolved. The proof is in the number of other Southerners who died in Abyei in the armed confrontation with the Khartoum government. Even now, some of them are in the area with the sons of Abyei. It is only now that the enemies of the SPLM/A have managed to exert effective negative influence on the leadership that one has started to doubt the commitment of the leadership, but not the people of South Sudan.

Of course, one cannot say that southern commitment to the cause of Abyei is absolutely uniform or undivided. In reality, there's nothing that can be said to be fully uniform. But there is relative uniformity. For the educated people, there are those from Warrap who may be few but influential, with low commitment. Others who may have personal conflicts with some Abyei politicians may have medium commitment. But the overwhelming majority of the people of South Sudan are very committed to the cause of Abyei. For the normal South Sudanese, those who know Abyei are more committed than those who do not. And then there are those who are negatively influenced by the politicians opposed to the cause of Abyei for their own personal reasons. Those who may not have heard about Abyei do not have obvious commitment for or against Abyei.

The factors that influence support or opposition to the cause of Abyei are therefore mainly related to the level of knowledge about the Abyei problem, political interests (among some of the educated elite), social relations, and proximity to Abyei Area.

There are also other reasons for the new trend to marginalize Abyei in South Sudan. Among these, the first is Uncle Bona Malual who happened to have a quarrel with some Abyei leaders and started to negatively influence the leadership of the South against those Abyei leaders. Second are enemies of the SPLM/A who have managed to place themselves around the leadership and who believe that the marginalization of Abyei could weaken the SPLM more, as Abyei people may be among the sources of SPLM/A unity. Third are some Warrap intellectuals who think that Abyei people are taking their positions. Fourth may be an extension of the official reaction to Deng Alor's position as one of the Former Political Detainees (FDs) opposed to the government.

We of course recognize that the border location of Abyei creates challenges that have influenced its status between Sudan and South Sudan. Because of its strategic border location, the traditional leaders of Abyei wisely adopted a policy that enabled them to protect and maintain their territory. This is now being wrongly held against them. Because of the location and the natural resources of the area, the Sudanese government has created obstacles to the resolution of the final status of Abyei which they know will return Abyei to the South and deprive its people of the wealth of the area they now enjoy.

This is of course a violation of the Abyei Protocol of the CPA which provided a solution and its implementation strategy to Abyei Area problem. However, because of the power imbalance between the governments of South Sudan and Sudan in dealing with the problem, and the diplomatic weakness of the South Sudan government, the CPA protocol on Abyei has not seen the light of day. This has caused great suffering for the people of Abyei and has resulted in the current impasse on the issue of the final solution for the area.

The government of the United States that brokered the deadlock between the government of the Sudan and the SPLM/A and came up with a solution which it imposed on the two parties has not pushed or worked hard enough to ensure the implementation of the Abyei Protocol. The Assessment and Evaluation Commission (AEC), which was the CPA implementation mechanism, could not effectively influence the IGAD, AU, USA and UN to make the parties implement the Abyei Protocol, starting with the ABC Report on to the Abyei community referendum. Everything was left to the two parties, Juba and Khartoum (NCP), who have ignored all the steps laid out by the CPA (Road map, PCA and the June Agreement).

Whether out of weakness or intentional diminished concern, the government of South Sudan is not pushing the cause of Abyei, nor is it engaging the region and the international community on the implementation of the AUHIP recommendations or making any other efforts to break the impasse. The silence of the South Sudan government may be the main reason for the impasse. The unclear quarrels of the President and some of his close advisors with individual Abyei political leaders might also have caused the government to become passive on the Abyei problem. The AUHIP that was supposed to push the AUSC to resolve the impasse has not exerted any effort. The AUSC that endorsed the AUHIP proposal has failed to call on the two parties to implement it, and has not referred the proposal to the AU Heads of State Assembly. Ethiopia, which is the leading source of troops for UNISFA and the Head of IGAD, is also unable to come up with any effective proposal. The people of Abyei had delegated and entrusted the SPLM with their cause, but the Movement has been severely weakened and rendered ineffective.

Some people try to justify their inaction by arguing that the people of Abyei are not united or are in fact very divided on their cause. In my own opinion, which I confidently believe represents the general position of the people of the area, more than 99% of the Ngok Dinka people are united on their cause. Zackaria Atem Piyin, known as a supporter of the North, when I asked him why he was supporting the North, told me,

My position is not support for the North, or I would not have remained a Christian, together with my family, despite the efforts of Northerners to convert me. My problem is that I doubt that you will manage to make the North allow the Ngok to vote in a referendum on their status. Let that time of voting in a referendum come and then ask me.

Atem asked that he be buried in Abyei town. His testimony at the Hague Court of Arbitration was a clear proof of his position. The government of the Sudan is resisting the referendum because they know that the people of Abyei are united on their cause.

Under the circumstances, I see major challenges in the way forward over the current impasse on Abyei. With the impasse and given the last UNSC resolution threatening the termination of the mandate of UNISFA, the people of the area of Abyei are exposed to the threat of renewed atrocities, mass displacement, and total destruction following the withdrawal of UNISFA. To avoid the threat of human catastrophe and break the impasse, I see the following as the possible courses of action:

A. Action by the Ngok Dinka:

- 1- Organize and mobilize themselves wherever they are and let their voices on their cause be heard;
- 2- Ngok traditional leadership, civil society, and politicians to seek a written explanation from the SPLM (despite its weaknesses) as to why it is passive on the current impasse and what it is doing for the final status of Abyei;
- 3- Abyei Community to mobilize lobby groups to promote their cause at the national, regional and international levels;
- 4- Abyei Area Administration to engage a legal team to support all the efforts for the cause of Abyei;
- 5- Abyei to mobilize resources to support lobbies and engage a legal group; and
- 6- The people of Abyei to prepare for the worst-case scenario.

B. Action by the SPLM:

- 1- Establish a desk in the General Secretariat to oversee the cause of Abyei, coordinate and monitor developments over the case of Abyei as the guarantors of the agreements over the area;
- 2- Be more proactive than has so far been the case and lead the government of South Sudan in its campaign on the final status of Abyei;
- 3- Legally prepare to take the issue further to international forums; and
- 4- Constantly consult the People of Abyei on the progress and the way forward.

C. The Government of South Sudan:

- 1- Come up with concrete strategies after wide consultations on how to approach the issue;
- 2- Establish a cabinet portfolio for Abyei to oversee its affairs and constantly brief the government;
- 3- Allow the State Assemblies and National Assembly to express their people's position on the Abyei cause, which may help in lobbying; and

- 4- Actively engage the government of the Sudan, IGAD, AU and the international community for possible immediate resolution to Abyei final status.

The question has been raised as to whether a special status for Abyei between Sudan and South Sudan is plausible. In my opinion, it is not. First of all, there is no special status to talk about. People of Abyei are totally marginalized in the Sudan and partially in South Sudan. So, I do not think a special status is plausible. Given the marginalization and neglect by the governments of both Sudan and South Sudan, the international community is called upon to mediate the search for a solution. The international community is at present the only hope for the people of Abyei. The international community can pressure the two governments to implement the AUHIP recommendations, run the affairs of the area for an agreed period, and convince the two governments to agree on final arrangements for Abyei. The UN in Abyei should be upgraded into a full mission instead of being only for security (UNISFA). The Abyei problem should be referred to the UNSC for a final settlement.

Since the UN and the Ngok Dinka traditional leadership are the only legally recognized authorities in the area, the international community should initiate appropriate alternatives to break the administrative impasse.

I would like to conclude with some reflections on the situation and make the following points:

- 1- Abyei people never joined the SPLM/A because of the New Sudan concept as asserted by Uncle Bona Malual in the statement that "Abyei, Nuba Mountainss and Blue Nile people joined the movement after hearing Dr. John Garang's New Sudan concept". The Ngok Dinka of Abyei participated in Anya-Nya I war 28 years before the SPLM/A. They formed and commanded Anya-Nya II in Bahr el Ghazal one year before the formation of the SPLM/A. The people of Abyei participated in both wars as South Sudanese, with added cause of being the most mistreated Southerners by the North.
- 2- Abyei people were the most committed and efficient cadres in Anya-Nya I and II, and in the SPLM/A. This is the reason why their fallen heroes and heroines in all the theatres of fighting in those wars were most admired, trusted and loved by the leaders and other members of the organizations. They never worked against any person or group, except in defending the cause of the Movement and the people of South Sudan.
- 3- I believe some South Sudanese political figures are always justifying their arguments of not supporting the cause of Abyei by blaming the

traditional leadership of Abyei, forgetting what their own South Sudanese politicians and traditional leaders did in 1947, when they agreed to remain in unity with the North. This later caused the loss of millions of lives and the suffering of the young generation to correct that decision. I do not question the reasons that made those South Sudanese in 1947 agree on the union with the North, but I believe Ngok traditional leaders were more justified in their decision than those Southerners who agreed in 1947 on continuing in the union with the North. This is because the Ngok traditional leaders feared the loss of their land and possible hostilities against their people if they decided to join the South at that time.

Late Lual Diing Wol once related to me what my father Deng (Majok) Kuol Arop, the Paramount Chief of the Ngok Dinka, said to William Deng Nhial in his presence,

I hear that you are talking of unity with these people. This is what I also say. If we do not remain united with them, they may claim all that we have. And we will not be able to revenge for all that they have done to us. Let us stay with them. A generation will eventually come to fight and defeat them in revenge. We can then separate from them.

No doubt there might have been personal interests in both cases, the 1947 South decision and Abyei traditional leaders opting to remain in the North, but the main reason was the interest of the land and the people in their thinking by then.

4. Reading uncle Bona Malual's book, *Abyei of the Ngok Dinka: Not Yet South Sudan*, I reached the conclusion that he may be one of the political figures who have worked to marginalize Abyei in South Sudan and make the government of Sudan difficult on the CPA Abyei Protocol implementation, obstruct the recognition by South Sudan Parliament of the people's referendum, which could have been a pressure on the Sudan, the region and the international community to implement the AUHIP recommendations on Abyei, and make false allegations against the SPLM/A cadres from Abyei.
- 5- While I stand to be corrected by those who are still alive and were military area commanders of county commissioners, Uncle Bona Malual was one of those individuals who were provided with protection and respect during his journeys with Christian Solidarity International (CSI) to Awiel and Gogrial areas, while Deng Alor was the Governor of the whole of Bahr el Ghazal and I, Cdr. Pieng Deng, first as Chief of Operations and later as Commander of Bahr el Ghazal. Gen. Paul Malong, Gen. James

Ajongo, Gen. Marial Chenuong, Gen. Dau Atorjuong, Gen. Kuot Deng Kuot, Gen. James Yol Kuol, Gen. James Achiei and others, who were commanding or administering the area, could be witnesses to verify whether there were attempts from those leaders from Abyei on the life of Uncle Bona Malual during those days.

- 6- In my own personal experience, I recall early in 1983 that there was a combined Anya-Nya II group, mainly from Ngok and Kuac, under late Bagat Aguek, deputized by late Ring Madut Ring (the brother of Uncle Bona Malual), which was operating in Abyei and Kuac areas. This group, popularly known as Ngok sons, was against going to fight in other areas and leave their Ngok people vulnerable. Part of the group left to Bilpam with Bagat to be the first group from Bahr el Ghazal to join the SPLM/A, and the other part remained to protect the area under Ring Madut.

This group later fought with another group in Twich area that resulted in the killing of late Yak Ajak, the Deputy of Miokol Deng Kuol, who was left in command when we left with Miokol in 1983 for Bilpam. Kerebino Kwanyin, who was the Deputy to Dr. John Garang, blamed the death of Yak Ajak on Miokol Deng and arrested him in 1984 for more than three months without charges. Also, during the commissioning of the first officers of Bahr el Ghazal group under Miokol, Kerebino refused allowing Miokol to be Major and Ring Madut Ring to be an officer. Miokol appealed to Dr. John to reconsider the decision on Ring Madut and leave his own position as was the wish of Kerebino. Ring Madut was commissioned at the rank of captain as recommended by Miokol. In my last conversation with brother Miokol before his death, he was unhappy with the way Kerebino Kwanyin was being allowed to mistreat others. I believe my brother Miokol Deng thought that Kerebino Kwanyin intentionally stopped the rescuing mission to those of brother Bulabek (Angui) Deng. I believe when brother Miokol heard about the total annihilation of the force under brother Bulabek, he asked himself whether to do something to Kerebino, whom he thought was the cause of the death of brother Bulabek. But because of his patriotism, he preferred to kill himself instead of creating a crisis within the Movement. As mentioned by Uncle Bona in his book, it was during the SPLM/A administration in 1985–1986 that Kuac was placed under his father, Madut Ring, as independent chiefdom. But Bona Malual falls short of mentioning the names of those individuals who were involved in the decision. To my knowledge, among them were two important persons, Justice Deng Arop Kuol, who was the legal authority in the area, and Mading Deng (Makuei) Kuol, the political officer. I myself, Commander Pieng Deng Kuol, took care of the families

of Madut Ring and Mathiang Madut Ring (direct brother of Uncle Bona), when they were displaced by Kerebino Kwanyin's war to Wanhallel area. Also, I personally took care of Nyanuat Mathiang Madut Ring till her death as my niece and a comrade. I always treated Uncle Bona Malual most respectfully despite my knowledge of his hatred to SPLM, not less than my elder brothers, although they were not necessarily with us in the physical struggle.

- 7- In my entire life I have never thought or dreamed of killing an innocent person; even a wounded or captured enemy soldier was never killed in my presence, let alone somebody related to me in one way or another. I am one of those who never blindly followed anybody. Instead, I deeply believe in comradeship and executed missions or orders that were related to the cause. Also, as I knew my great, visionary, and patriotic leader, Dr. John Garang, it never came to my knowledge that he could plan the killing of any person. Despite the hatred of Uncle Bona Malual to Dr. John, he was still trusted by Dr. John to represent the Movement on very important missions. Dr. John was more concerned with the public interest than targeting individuals. He always engaged even those who were against him for the good of the struggle. So, I sincerely deny the claim of Uncle Bona in his book, 'that we were being instructed by Dr. John to kill him.'
- 8- Uncle Bona Malual in his book confidently writes, "All the destructions to Abyei in 2008 and 2011 were the result of the attempts from Abyei's leaders in SPLM to take Abyei by force to the South". I am sorry to say to dear Uncle that he may be basing his allegation on what he has heard from Khartoum or he may be motivated by his quarrel with some of Abyei's leaders. The facts are that both destructions were started by fighting within the Joint Integrated Units (JIUs) and Joint Police, which were commanded by non-Abyei SPLA officers. Also, Khartoum designed all those clashes in order to obstruct the implementation of Abyei Protocol. The Joint Administration and Joint Integrated Units, combined with Khartoum's ill intention, were always the source of conflicts and destructions in Abyei and not the SPLM/A leaders from Abyei as claimed by Uncle Bona Malual. In conclusion, Ngok people of Abyei contributed greatly in Anya-Nya I and SPLM/A wars. They were very effective in their duties and were very much respected by the commanders and leaders. Some of the Abyei people played a very vital role in most of the SPLM/A political, diplomatic, and military successes and victories. Because of their commitment and loyalty to the Movement, people like Bona Malual chose to pick unjustified quarrel with some of Abyei leaders in the SPM/A. After reading Bona Malual's book, it became obvious to me that what the people of Abyei

have been saying is true. Uncle Bona Malual Madut has been behind the marginalization of Ngok people lately by South Sudan leadership, and whether intentionally or inadvertently, he has negatively contributed to the impasse on the case of Abyei. Abyei's people believe that Bona Malual and his allies were the ones who influenced the President to stop the National Assembly from continuing with the motion to recognize Ngok people's Referendum. After the reconciliation between Uncle Bona Malual and Abyei leaders, things may be changing for the better and may positively contribute to the final resolution of Abyei cause. At least, this is my hope.

Chapter Six:

Frontline Invisible Diplomat

Arop Deng Kuol

The Challenges of the New Nation's Diplomacy in the 21st Century

Diplomacy as the science and art of positive bridging of contradictions and differences among contenders always remains complex and full of challenges, if not perilous dilemmas, no matter how successful a diplomat might be. Still, there is nothing more beautiful than the memories of a diplomat who has been at the foreign service frontier although misjudged in his effort of serving his country and people. Such a person might regret when the Almighty intervenes to transfer him to the silent garden of his final rest, where he could remain in calm even without the redemption of the acknowledgment of his contribution.

The story of what many peace lovers described as a senseless war that engulfed the new nation of South Sudan on December 15th, 2013 fills me with memories as I reflect on my assignment of 22 years as a diplomat serving my people from the time of the revolution to that of independence. A diplomat's principles of bridging with the competitors and relieving enmity is a task that resembles what Martin Luther King termed to "make the lion and the

lamb roommates without panic or fear.” This is the phenomenon that could have been pursued by the new nation, but it would have meant transforming both greed and pride in the same cabin into responsible governance, which was the dream of this invisible diplomat. The first 21 years of my service in Ethiopia combined guerrilla tactics and conventional diplomacy. Mine is a story that covers outcomes which people might know without knowing how they happened and who the people were that made them happen.

The advancement of technology should have promoted and eased the function of a diplomat, unlike in the early diplomacy where distances were far apart. Now, technologies have shortened the distances and brought people who were far removed into our ears, vision and physical presence without difficulty or delay. Yet, the fear of unknown consequences makes it difficult for a security officer to trust such tools that could otherwise be used by him in his capacity as a diplomat. So, the potential for technology to empower a diplomat to deliver more to our national peace and even world peace is limited by this issue of trust and the need to often operate in clandestine manner.

My account as an invisible diplomat covers the important role that I played during the struggle in both the military and diplomatic arenas for the advancement of the New Sudan vision. Mine is the story of a man formally known as Arop Deng Kuol, but later code named as Blue. The story covers both clandestine and open diplomatic work which contributed to the relative success of the SPLM vision of New Sudan.

Reminiscences of a Freedom Fighter

In 1981, I was a finalist in Salaam intermediate school in Wau when a series of events took place which I witnessed or participated in. One was the attack on cattle of Abiem from Aweil East in Tolmach at the outskirt of Abyei town. The other was the famous demonstration in Wau against the regime in Khartoum. I was among the ringleaders of the demonstration along with my cousin Dombek Deng Kuol, who was killed during the demonstration. The demonstration was part of resistance to the policy of Khartoum. Later, I joined the SPLM/A as a freedom fighter with remarkable opportunities for participation. The genesis of enmity of Ngok Dinka against Missiriya in addition to the above events make me proud without anybody challenging my identity as a Southerner. My first experience was to pursue the Missiriya who attacked Abiem cattle camp at around 5:00 am and killed 32 girls and 9 men who were cattle herders in Tolmach. The gunshots were heard in Abyei, a distance of about 12 kilometers. We all converged at the place of the incident. It goes without saying that Ngok Dinka sons have the right and moral obligation to protect any Southerner,

whether in Abyei territory or elsewhere within South Sudan. I joined the group that rushed to where the sounds of guns were heard. We arrived at the location of the incident after two hours of running and found only dead bodies mixed with dead cows. It was in that area where those of us who had rushed to the scene then organized ourselves by dividing the roles for those who did not have guns to evacuate the wounded and those with guns to pursue the attackers.

It was the same year all the elites from Abyei were collected all over Southern Sudan and arrested in Kober in Khartoum. They were accused of instigating Southerners to rebel against the dismantling of the Addis Ababa agreement by the Khartoum regime. The first group I witnessed were those of Edward Lino who was arrested and brought to Wau Police Headquarters. I remember very well that I went to visit them in Wau police station where I found Edward Lino seated under the tree, smoking while he was waiting for me. He needed some items from the market that he wanted me to buy for them. The security officer came and told Edward to go inside and asked me to leave immediately. Edward Lino quarreled with him because the officer was very rude in his approach to us.

The arrest of the entire elites of Ngok Dinka in the South was among the first betrayal of Abyei issue. The regime in Khartoum was having an illusion that the Ngok Dinka were the ones organizing rebellion in Southern Sudan. Arresting and detaining them without the burden of proof would, in their calculation, reduce the rebellion; unfortunately, it resulted into something totally counterproductive. Many students felt angry and decided to join Michael Miokol Deng Majok at Küir Kou, where Capt. Aguek Bol provided some basic military training for those who were interested in organized resistance. As the school captain, I effectively organized the demonstration in 1982 and we burned the ruling party headquarters. Although the demonstration was against the re-division of the South and oil development in South Sudan with refineries in the North, Abyei issue was at the center of our anger against the government.

Due to all the above events, I was forced to get closer to members of the Ngok Dinka elements in the Sudanese army, among them Kuol Arop Malek, Aguek Bol, Aluong Alor Achuol and Kac Kier Ayuel, who were in Wau, with very active support from Lt. Col. Kuol Arop Malek, who sometimes organized some ammunition for resistance in Abyei Area.

Among other reasons for joining the SPLA, in addition to the resistance of Nyangater in Abyei, was the rancorous killing of a member of Parliament, Deng Deng Akot in Aweil, that shocked and angered many students in Wau town, as the news was being followed through the radio in the Ministry of Education. In March 1985, for the second time, I re-joined the struggle by joining the SPLM from Wau to Turalei, where the remnants of Jamus battalion under Capt.

Malou Kuol was based. Upon our arrival, just an hour later, the Murahleen attacked the SPLA position at the outskirts of Turalei town. Although many of my colleagues who joined me were confused by the commotion during the 30 minutes of fiery exchange, that was normal for me because of the previous experiences I had at Kiir Kou with Kuol Ngor and Luk Yuai in the beginning of Anya-Nya II formation and the training I had obtained from Capt. Bagat Aguek in early 1982. The commander of the force by the name of Capt. Malou Kuol, who was leading the remnants of the Jamus Battalion in the area, was among those immediately killed in action.

The first time I shot a gun was in 1981 when I used to move with my two elder brothers, Arop-bar Deng Kuol and Deng-Jur Alor, who used to hunt animals. I was a clerk at Wau Hospital in the office of Dr. Luka Yel when I decided to join the movement. It was one of the evenings after we had finished constructing two huts in Haya Gone in Wau with my maternal uncle, Duper Ngor, who accommodated me after the government took the house in which I was residing. At the same time, I received a gift from my cousin, Awor Biong Thuc, who furnished my room with new hand-knitted bedsheets which she made in Juba and sent to me in Wau.

Although there were people older than me in the company, I was selected to guide the movement of the recruits to Bilpam. We were 420, both students and some villagers, who had joined the SPLA at Turalei. We continued to get more members on the road. The journey to the SPLA General Headquarters at Bilpam took us four months on foot, with dangerous obstacles from Anya-Nya II. It was the time Anya-Nya II under Akuot Atem was dispersed in Bilpam and now resorted to ambushing recruits going to Bilpam from other regions of Southern Sudan as their strategy to weaken the Movement of John Garang with whom they had differed. Crossing from Wunroor to Tiergol became like a bridge that is too far. So many people lost their lives between these two areas as a result of ambushes laid by remnants of Anya-Nya II against any recruit joining the SPLA. We were ambushed several times and attacked repeatedly at night, but because of accurate gathering of information about the location of these groups, we moved forward or backward to avoid any casualties.

It took us two months to cross to Akobo where I remained constructively engaging one of the attackers and sending two recruits to swim across and inform the Commander at Tiergol of the 400 recruits across the river. As a tactic, I told one of the gentlemen who was responsible for night attacks to go and bring a bull so that we spend the night there, which he believed. My understanding after two months dealing with them was that their objective was a mixture to either kill recruits or loot their belongings, which became my entry point in engaging them as a delaying tactic.

In July 1985, I formally joined general military training as an SPLA soldier in Bonga training centre. On 14th November 1985, after three months of general military training in Bonga, I joined an exam set for those who were interested to join the signal unit course. When I first met my brother Kuol Deng Abot in his house in Itang, I had a discussion with him about the type of specialization I was going to take when I joined the training. According to my academic interest, I was aiming to be a medical doctor because I specialized as a biology student during Sudan High School leaving certificate. So, my first choice was to join any medical training in the SPLA so that I could achieve both an academic vision and revolutionary qualification, but Kuol argued against that choice for his own reasons from experience in the SPLA.

The second option was to be a Radioman because, when I was in Wau, the role of radio became very important to me because the Northerners were not telling the truth of the death of Deng Deng Akot. But my experience in radio was more with the Ministry of Education radio where everyone would go and get information from Aweil. I developed concrete interest in being a signalist after I visited Wau Garrison (Greenti) and met with Kac Kiir Ayuel in the residence of Lt. Col. Kuol Arop Malek who was the commander of the garrison, and Kac Kiir Ayuel who was a member of the Sudanese military intelligence. He was sent by Lt. Col. Kuol to go to the radio room and find out what the situation in Aweil was after the killing of members of Parliament. Immediately, I realized the importance of being a radio operator in the war so as to know much about the Jalaba (the Northern Arabs). I would have to join the signal unit if not the medical unit. My brother had a different opinion, which was for me to join the intelligence unit in which he was engaged. After an argument, he agreed. So, when time availed itself in Bonga training, where the exam was prepared under the supervision of comrade Salva, I decided to join the group for the exam.

Survival in Seven Grave Incidents

I was an active officer in the headquarters of the Commander-in-Chief, Dr. John Garang de Mabior, from 1985 to 1994. I encountered seven incidents in 23 days on official mission which took me back and forth between Southern Sudan and Ethiopia, carrying out orders. In 1989, I was first released by my direct commander, Gier Chuang Aluong, to attend officer college at Bonga. I arrived in Gambella at the SPLM/A compound where I was to spend a night and go to Panyido the following day to visit the family of my elder brother, Kuol Deng Abot. While I was trying to get a place to sleep, Capt. Arop Moyak, who was the SPLA coordinator in Gambella, sent someone to me to see him

urgently. After an hour, at around 19:00 hours, I reported to him and he told me, "Comrade, you have a very urgent mission tonight and must go back to Kapoeta. Comrade Salva Kiir has just released his car now to come and take you to Dima, where you will get a truck that will take you to Kapoeta to join Gier for another mission" which was not revealed to him. I told him that I had just come from Kapoeta. He said he had told Salva Kiir that, but that the Commander-in-Chief had said that it was a must for me to go back. Capt. Moyak invited me for dinner at the Ethiopian hotel while I was waiting for Comrade Salva's driver, Lal Longo.

After we finished dinner, Comrade Kiir gave me a Korean jeep to take me to Zinc post at the outskirts of Gambella, which was an SPLA base. Unfortunately, while we were getting into a jeep with one of my colleagues, Andrea Ricardo, I realized that the driver was drunk. So, I reported to Capt. Arop Moyak that this kind of driver could not drive the car, but he assured me that he was always drunk and could drive like that so I shouldn't worry.

The first incident occurred in Gambella within a period of no more than 25 minutes. The drunk driver overturned the jeep, wounding two people. Luckily enough, I came out with no injury. So, I drove back the same jeep with wounded comrades, including Andrea Ricardo, who was seriously injured, to where Arop Moyak was seated. They were rushed to the hospital. Arop told me that since I was ok, I should proceed with Lal Longo to my mission.

At around 5:30 am, the nurse woke me up for an injection. I was wondering what had brought me to the hospital. Lal was standing by the side of the bed while the nurse was preparing the injection. I asked him, "What happened? Why am I here?" He responded by saying that I was very sick on the way, which began at 3:00 am in a place called Tapei so he had to rush me to the hospital. Again, I asked the nurse what they found in the medical examination. She said it was chronic malaria, with stress of the long trip and fatigue. After she left the room, I told the driver that my mission was very important and urgent. Therefore, since I was feeling okay, we should proceed with our journey since Gier was waiting for me in Kapoeta.

The second incident that I encountered was when we were ambushed by the Sudanese militia from Taposa at Magos Boma, which killed one officer, seven soldiers and two women, including the wife of my Uncle Anyiel Agon. When I arrived at Dima, I found Ural trucks filled with families and some soldiers going to Kapoeta waiting for me.

The third incident occurred on the bus while on my return from Kapoeta on the way to Officers College. The bus overturned at Gore mountain, while climbing.

The fourth incident was on June 4, 1988, when a Ural truck overturned in Chukudum dry stream on the way back from Latuke to Gambella.

The fifth incident was the landmine that blew up the Ural truck killing 42 soldiers, wounding several at Morkuwa between Chukudum and Junction. It was around 17:00 pm; I was selected to be among 15 officers going for scouting around Kiyala under the command of major Bol Madut.

The Sixth incident happened on the Gambella-Panyido road near Akobo when I decided to visit my brother's family before joining the Officer's College. After I arrived for the second time to Gambella on my way to the officers' course, I boarded a public bus on the way to Panyido. In the bus, I met one of my cousins who told me that they had been hearing about my several incidents on my various missions and he hoped that everything was fine with me. While we were chatting about the previous incident and before completing my report, I found myself feeling as if somebody was lying on my neck and I was wondering what had happened. A few minutes later, I realized that the bus had overturned and some children and people were screaming and some were struggling to get out through the windows. After I regained consciousness, I began to look where the window was to get out with my cousin. Luckily enough, all of us came out without any injuries, so we decided to walk for 30 minutes to town, inform the people that the bus had overturned and ask for an ambulance to rush to the scene of the accident. Because the college had already started and I was worried not to miss it, I decided not to wait, so I took a tractor and proceeded to Panyido with it so that I could go back and proceed to Bonga before any further mission.

The seventh incident which happened later was the bomb that fell into our car, killing five officers while on the way for reconnaissance at Kiyala in the beginning of Bright Star Campaign operation that totally liberated Eastern Equatoria from the regime forces in 1989.

From Unaccompanied Minors to Child Soldiers and Lost Boys

In 1993, following the failure of the Juba operations and the loss of Torit and Kapoeta to the Sudanese army, in addition to the defection of William Nyuon at Pageri, to join Dr. Riek Machar, the SPLA was driven away from Eastern Equatoria and held ground at the strip of Ashua river, defending only Nimule post and Natinga. As usual, the officers at the headquarters of Dr. Garang discussed the situation in the SPLA every evening around the fence of the Commander-in-Chief, wherever they were stationed. It was in Natinga

at around 21:00 that Capt. Mou Manaseh, 1st Lt Arop Deng, Capt. Luol Chol, SGT Arop Madiing, and Capt. Chol Mareng laid down their sleeping bags outside Dr. Garang's compound. They discussed the challenges faced by comrades Oyai and Pieng at Ashua River with a force of not exceeding 350. They were resisting waves of attacks from the Sudanese army who were determined to capture Nimule and gain control over the Uganda border. So, we were discussing where to get a force that could reinforce Ashua front and relieve Oyai from the pressure. Then one of the comrades said that if Kakuma was not in Kenya we would have got the 40,000 Red Army in Kakuma to rescue the situation because they had now matured.

The comrade was expressing his regret that Kakuma refugee camp did not allow access to SPLA, as Itang did in Ethiopia. We were aware that Dr. Garang always benefitted from conversations with his bodyguards during his resting time, but I did not anticipate that he was listening and what he might have thought of the discussion, if he had heard it. The following morning, before we took our tea, he called me as he sat in front of his room in the compound, drinking tea as a routine. He told me that he shared the same concern about the situation of Omega-4 and Omega-14 (Oyai and Pieng); if they got defeated in Ashua, it would be a total setback to the Movement. He said that there was a need for us to open other fronts to divert the concentration against Omega-4 in Ashua. He continued by saying that the only soft target would be Kapoeta. If we got fresh recruits of the size of one battalion, with his HQs elements and support weapons, he could force the enemy to downgrade pressure against Omega-4 and Omega-14 in Ashua.

While Dr. Garang was examining other possible ways, he asked me how we could get those Red Army out of Kakuma refugee camp to rescue the situation in the frontline. After a few minutes of digesting his question, and although we had discussed it at night, I told him that the only possible way was to take old video cassettes of the Red Army during their stay in Panyido that could remind them of the liberation struggle. In particular, if they saw Pieng, to whom they very much attached as their commander, that would move at least some of them to re-join the SPLA in the front line.

Without completing the strategy, I was narrating, he ordered me to get into his room and get all video cassettes and screen them and get particularly one of the Red Army of Panyido who were resettled in Kakuma by the UN when they left Ethiopia in 1991. After I screened the cassettes and found the correct one that would be useful for mobilization, he ordered me to move immediately to Kakuma with a letter to Deng Dau who was the chairperson of Kakuma refugees under the UN to recruit former Panyido Red Army who had been evacuated from Ethiopia and settled in Kakuma refugee camp. He cautioned

me to be careful and that I should not recruit any child under 15 years old, but to concentrate on 15-18 years old and above. I reminded him that there were 35 Hunamog trucks on the way from Germany sent by Comrade Edward Lino that could be delayed or timed with mobilization so that they could be used for the transportation of the recruits from Kakuma refugee camp to Natinga. Lastly, I advised Dr. Garang to write a letter to Kakuma Refugee Chairperson, Deng Dau, a former SPLA disabled officer who sustained injury on his leg in 1986. So, I told Garang that Deng Dau was my friend and would assist me to carry out the mission successfully.

The Chairman assigned one car to transport me to Lokichogio where I would take Arop Moyak's car to drop me in Deng Dau's residence in Kakuma refugee camp. When I went back to my colleagues, they were wondering why I had overstayed in the compound and what I was discussing with the Chairman. All of them knew me, and knew that I couldn't share any secrets with them, but I told them that I was leaving on a mission in one hour to somewhere which I would not reveal. But Capt. Mou said that they knew I was a man of clandestine missions, but that they would know about the mission later and hoped it would help the Movement. So, I closed any more discussion on the topic and continued drinking my tea. At around 14:00, I was given a Toyota pickup to drop me at Lokichogio, where I got Arop Moyak's car to take me to Kakuma refugee camp.

After I arrived, I had consultations with some of my colleagues based in Lokichogio who advised me to enter Kakuma refugee camp at around 18:00 which was the time all UN employees, including the Whites, went to their homes. Exactly at 18:30, which was at sunset, I arrived at the gate of Deng Dau's residence. I knocked on the door. A young man came out and invited me in where I met with Comrade Deng Dau. After he ordered tea for me, I decided to brief him that I was sent to him by Dr. Garang for a secret mission which would take two weeks there, but that I would give him a letter later when the environment was appropriate. Deng immediately called one young woman and told her to prepare a room for me.

After dinner, I remained with him alone and then gave him the letter from the Chairman requesting him to cooperate with me on my recruitment mission. The letter said I would provide the background to the need for a quick recruitment of a fresh force. So, Deng asked me how I wanted to do the exercise. I told him that I didn't know the situation in the refugee camp, but that my thinking was to use midnight as the time I was going to play an old video cassette of a Red Army who were there in the camp to remind them of the Revolution. A few days after that, I would tell them about the mission, and that the Chairman needed reinforcement from them to rescue the Movement,

in particular Pieng in Ashua. Fortunately, Deng told me that it was possible because they had kept their organization in Panyido as it was. By informing their group leaders, they would organize the recruitment for us safely. I told Deng that I would not be visible at day time in the camp, except at midnight only. He agreed with me.

I started the program two days later after we studied the situation carefully, identified the leaders and played the video for the whole night. The program ran for ten days without explaining the reason for the film at this time. At the eleventh day, I and the Chairman of the camp joined them and explained the need for recruitment of a force of 1500 which was going to be transported by trucks arriving from Germany with Edward Lino through Nairobi. I told them that Dr. Garang would receive them in Narus. All the children were excited to go back to the SPLA and meet the Chairman and comrade Pieng again. On the day cars arrived at Kakuma area at around 03:00, all 30 trucks were filled with those who had decided to join the SPLA. Unfortunately, the operation was discovered the following day in the morning when the UN realized the children were moving back to Lockichokio on foot, following their colleagues who had left at dawn. It was that time that the UN announced over the BBC that SPLA had stolen the children back to South Sudan from Kakuma.

The UN recollected those who were moving on foot and took them back to Kakuma. And later, a UN representative visited Narus and met with Dr. Garang to find out what had happened to the children that had crossed to South Sudan. Garang tried to explain the situation in liberated areas and told him that those children had left the camp because they realized the enemy had captured many liberated areas and they did not know what happened to their parents in the country, so they might have gone back to their families. Out of fear that children would continue to follow their colleagues, the UN representative proposed that they would resettle the minors into various countries, a suggestion that Dr. Garang agreed with. So, the resettlement program was organized in name of the "lost boys" as a good reason for resettlement. The 1500 Red Army that arrived in SPLA areas were retrained and were the ones that reinforced the SPLA position around Kapoeta and later recaptured Kapoeta from the enemy and lifted the pressure from the Ashua front.

A New Diplomatic Chapter Begins

Following the successful establishment of both diplomatic and military relations between SPLM/A and the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia in 1997 and regaining of mutual confidence, I was confronted with serious challenges

that threatened the relations between the Movement and the Ethiopian government.

It was 1998 when the official kick-off of a serious negotiation between SPLM/A and the government of the Sudan was underway, after Abuja-1 and Abuja-2 quest for peace had failed to deliver in Nigeria under the auspices of Abelsalam Abubaker, the President of Nigeria. General Salva Kiir Mayardit was the head of the SPLM/A negotiating committee and Dr. Mustafa Ismail was the team leader of Sudan delegation. The so-called two areas meant Blue Nile and Nuba Mountains which had been a part of the joint struggle of SPLM/A since 1984. They were under the leadership of Malik Agar and Yusif Kuwa Mekki who were the most senior commanders in the SPLM/A that came from those two areas. Discussions took place under the Chairmanship of Seyoum Mesfin who was the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Ethiopia and chairperson of IGAD Council of Ministers during the negotiations between the SPLM/A and the government of Sudan in 1998 Addis Ababa. Although I had been in frequent contact with Mesfin, it was during these negotiations that I established more friendly relations with him. As a representative of the SPLM/A since 1994, I was recognized by the government of Ethiopia as an ambassador with close contact with foreign affairs and the office of the Prime Minister Meles Zenawi. I had more access to the leadership in Ethiopia than the Addis-based Sudanese ambassador who had established relations during the TPLF struggle in the 1980s.

The fall of Yabus Post to the SPLA forces marked the beginning of the SPLA return to Blue Nile under the concealment of a football game between Ethiopia and Sudan. The Project of SHILU (Sudan Humanitarian International Lifeline of Upper Nile) surfaced immediately after Malik came back from the liberated area. After several meetings conducted between commander Malik and Lam Akol, a document of understanding was signed in Yabus to deliver some medicine to the area through African Rights of Alex De Waal.

The most important events were the creation of SHILU by Malik Agar, Yusif Kuwa Mekki and Lam Akol; the capture of the Ethiopian Opposition leader, Thokwath Paul, by the SPLA, the return of Sadiq El-Mahdi to Khartoum, and the capture of Kassala by Abdelaziz Adam El-Hilu. The creation of SHILU was by a London-based non-governmental organization named African Rights under Alex De Waal and Yor Akol. The document signed by the three gentlemen did not reveal the conspiracy embedded in the plan; rather it indicated that the two comrades were supporting an organization that was to deliver medicines for the liberated area of Yabus. Although I was aware of the meeting being conducted by Malik at this early stage, which I was not allowed to attend as representative of an organization for which Malik was my

boss, I could not discourage my comrade but tried to alert him to a precarious direction. The series of meetings was taking a dangerous trajectory as it was being organized by Alex De Waal, whose agenda was known. Six months later, I received the signed document which proved my suspicion to be right and I forwarded it to Dr. Garang who was the only person that could reveal the danger to our two comrades.

Two months later, the biggest conference was set to be conducted in the ICRC compound at the outskirts of Addis Ababa. Just two days before this day, I advised comrade Malik to inform Commander-in-Chief about the conference, its participants, and its objective. So, comrade Malik came to my house and requested I call Dr. John Garang so that he could inform him. After they talked, Malik told me that the Commander-in-Chief was breathing fire and he warned against the conference. He said the intention of the conference was to divide the movement because Dr. Lam Akol wanted to go to Khartoum but he could not go without any force. Garang gave some deep analysis of the situation and told him that he had the agreement signed between Yusif Kuwa, Malik and Lam Akol.

After Malik left, Dr. Garang called me back and told me that he had instructed Malik to go to the meeting and destroy it because if he avoided them, they would still have hope and continue without them. Just before Malik phoned, Garang had called Yusif Kuwa in Nairobi and stopped him from going to Addis Ababa because Malik could attend instead on his behalf. The Commander-in-Chief told me that comrade Salva was passing by to Asmara in the following morning. So, I should arrange for Malik to meet with him. Then I told Dr. Garang that Malik got pressure from his wife because Yor and Alex were renting their house, which they used as a tool to put pressure on our comrade. Therefore, since comrade Salva was passing by, could he send something along that would resolve Malik's needs for the rent of the house. Garang obliged by sending five thousand dollars to the family.

The following morning, I facilitated comrade Malik Agar to use the VIP lounge in the airport where comrade Salva met him and had a discussion about the conference. There, he was told that Dr. Lam Akol had established contact with Khartoum and if he was involved in the conference, he was going to divide the Movement again and surrender the force. Lastly, Salva told him that Dr. Garang gave him \$5,000 for his family and promised that SRRA was working hard on the way forward, which was going to include Blue Nile and Nuba Mountainss. The following day at around 7:30 am, comrade Malik called me and said I should join him in his house to take him to the meeting place. I immediately jumped into my car and went to Malik's house in Wolo Safer, where we proceeded to the ICRC compound. On our arrival, Yor Akol and

Abdul Mohamed were waiting outside for Malik to arrive because everyone was seated. All donors were invited to the final meeting that was going to lead to the signing of a new humanitarian corridor and separation of the three areas from SRRA responsibility.

Both men were shocked at seeing me come with Malik and Abdul and quickly rushed back into the meeting and informed Alex De Waal of my presence. Yor tried to call Malik in, but he told him that he needed Alex and Abdul to come out first. So, Yor followed Abdul and they had a brief meeting standing outside, consulting on how they should deal with me and tried to assess what might be new with Malik while we were at the cafe taking tea. After their quick consultation, Yor and Alex came to take Malik to the meeting and to face me separately. Alex told Malik that they were ready and everyone was waiting for him. So, Malik turned to me and said, "Arop let us go in." Alex immediately reacted by saying, "No, he has to wait outside here or go and come back later." Malik said, "There is no way for Arop to wait outside; he is my representative here and if he is not going, we will not enter." Yor said, "Malik, all the other meetings were not attended by Arop and therefore he will get the essence of the meeting later." Malik repeated his position that if I didn't go in, he would not enter the meeting. A discussion continued between them for a while. Then I told Malik, "There is no problem. You are my boss; you can go in and I will wait here." Malik stood his ground. I was not aware how he wanted to handle the issue because we had not discussed the matter after he had talked to Salva and Garang. Alex said that the two Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Ethiopia and Eritrea, Seyoum Mesfin and Petros Solomon, were following that meeting and it should succeed so that the humanitarian agencies would take the food of the army from Ethiopian Defence Force to Blue Nile. Alex tried to twist Malik's thinking that he should not destroy the opportunity.

Yor and Alex decided to go back and consult with Lam Akol inside. After a few minutes of consultation, Abdul Mohamed came back and told Malik that Dr. Lam has agreed for Arop to attend the meeting. So, Malik called me from where I was waiting and told me to join him in the meeting. So, we entered the meeting and found that there was a huge number representing various international NGOs and donors. Alex opened the meeting by narrating the genesis of the meeting based on the agreement reached between him, Yusif and Malik to provide humanitarian assistance to three areas. He also said that after Yabus was liberated, SHILU provided some small medical assistance with support from African Rights. He then invited Dr. Lam Akol to present the situation on the ground and how much the three areas of Blue Nile, Upper Nile and Nuba Mountainss needed relief. Dr. Lam appreciated the gathering and apologized for the delay. For Malik, he began by saying that he apologized

on behalf of comrade Yusif Kuwa who was prevented by the Commander-in-Chief to attend the meeting. He further excused himself by requesting the participants to forgive him because he was not going to continue participating in the meeting and would not sign any agreement, because the Commander-in-Chief had told him that SRRA was organizing a way forward strategy for humanitarian assistance that will include Blue Nile and Nuba Mountains. Immediately, Alex took the floor and requested a five-minute break with the intention that he would continue to persuade Malik to sign the agreement with Dr. Lam. Malik got up and told me that we should go back home. But Alex, Abdul, Yohanis and Yor followed us and requested a word with Malik. So, I stepped aside a distance and left Malik talking to them. Malik totally refused to go back for signing. Alex tried to threaten Malik that Seyoum and Petros Solomon of Eritrea were waiting for the agreed document; otherwise Ethiopia would not continue to provide food to SPLA forces in Blue Nile. But Malik said that SRRA would deliver food soon. This was the end of SHILU establishment. We succeeded in preventing the division of the Movement by anti-revolution counter-movement.

Dr. Riek's Era of "Why Garang Must Go"

Historically, I was part of the refugee evacuation from Itang-Ethiopia in 1991 as a result of what Dr. Riek called "Why Garang Must Go" slogan that divided the SPLM/A. One night, after hanging up my telephone, I resumed a sleepless night thinking about the dark history and losses of innocent people during the time of what was a senseless war in 1991. I started calculating how I was going to achieve the evacuation of innocent people and relieve the heroic Colonel from what would soon become a dark page in the history of our country. After I examined all possible options for the evacuation, I finally settled by taking some money from my personal account, asking my wife to mobilize some funds, and then requesting the security attaché, Brigadier Mahmood Solomon, to contribute to the evacuation of innocent people from Pagak. I passed the rest of the night reflecting back and forth, calculating the evacuation process and imagining any failure that might occur and its consequences.

I was in bed physically, but my mind remained roaming around, imagining the distance, routes, and quickest way to avert the crisis that loomed in Pagak. I refused to accept any failure of rescuing the innocent people. I got up early in the morning ready to take a trip to Gambella and possibly to Pagak to evacuate those who were at risk of elimination. I went to my office early before my normal routine time to prepare for the day ahead, before I hit the road. I called the Colonel and informed him that some buses for evacuation would arrive

in the next three days. He was mindful that if the information reached those intending to eliminate the minorities, they might take action before the day of evacuation. But he had already decided that the next day, after he sent buses to evacuate the people to Gambella, he could fly them to Juba with Ethiopian Airline. After we managed to evacuate the group, I went to Gambella with two flights to transport them to Juba. I managed to airlift 480 women, children and soldiers to Juba.

From Rokon to Addis Ababa

On the eve of the fall of Mengistu regime in Ethiopia in 1991, the wind blew heavily against the gallant SPLA forces at Gambella frontier. The overthrow of Mengistu led to the termination of relations between SPLM/A and the new EPRDF government in Ethiopia. At around 20:00 hours before taking dinner, I received an urgent coded message from Deng Yei, the SPLA signalist based in Addis Ababa Station. The message came with "Flash" on top which means "Top Urgent". The clouds were heavily looming and it became extremely dark as if it was going to rain. But fortunately, the TRC-340 radio communication was fully charged, waiting for any call from other stations. Although there was a generator, it could not be illuminated because an enemy Antinov bomber hovered over the active front. But it was possible to receive messages using touch to receive and decode them. After I deciphered the message, it became clear that it was from "Fire" (Deng Alor). The message appeared to be that Comrade Mengistu Hailemariam wanted Dr. Garang to immediately report to Addis Ababa for a very important consultation. I registered the message in the incoming messages book and went to C-in-C and informed him that there was a top urgent message from Fire (Deng Alor) in Addis Ababa, requesting him to go and meet with Mengistu immediately. Garang responded with, "What happened? Does Fire not know that we are engrossed in operations?" I told him that there were no details mentioned in the message, but it could possibly relate to the waves of Ethiopian rebels moving towards our forces at Western Ethiopian frontier, Assosa.

Comrade Dr. Garang received the book from me and used his touch to read the open page that contained the pertinent message. I stressed to him that according to our radio station with Majak Agot in Demdelo, the rebels were advancing along the northern border and western frontier of Assosa. The Commander-in-Chief of the SPLM/A, Comrade Dr. Garang was preparing for the capture of Rokon Post at the outskirts of Juba town, which could lead to the total siege of the Southern Sudan Capital, Juba. So, while Fire was asked by President Mengistu to call for Dr. Garang and to report within no time for

an important consultation, Garang was engrossed in sealing off the Sudanese army at the outskirts of Juba. After we captured Rokon, Dr. Garang decided to move to Addis, a trip that took more than three days driving day and night. On our way, we received the report of a possible coup by Dr. Lam and Riek Machar before the arrival of Dr. Garang to Gambella.

The Birth of the Idea of Ramciel As Capital

In 1994, I was on my way to Nairobi in search of a life partner when I was ordered to report to Rumbek for the inspection of the mobilized four brigades reported by Alternate Commander Bol Madut. The mission had double tasks. The first part was to inspect the mobilized brigade and their readiness for the liberation of Rumbek town for the second time. The second part of my mission was to go and search for what Dr. John Garang had framed in his mind to be the imminent capital of South Sudan, which he called Ramciel, meaning the meeting point of the three original States of Southern Sudan: Equatoria, Upper Nile and Bahr el Ghazal. He gave me a map to go and search for an old port which was used by the British along the Nile in the 1940s in Aliab area that could extend to the bank of the White Nile and become the future crossing point and the new capital of South Sudan, to be called "Ramciel". The Commander-in-Chief instructed me that after I discovered the old docking point, I should report to him so that A/Commander Bior Ajang, with seven other officers, would join me in the place carrying ammunition for the mobilized brigade. Secondly, he told me that I would be joined in Akot by A/Commander Nhial Deng Nhial from Washington. The mission took me 8 months in operation around Cueibet and Kubri-Deng Nhial.

After an operation at Bar-El-Naam commanded by comrade Nhial Deng, I received a message promoting him as the Governor of Bahr el Ghazal. It was a few weeks later that I resumed my social program in Nairobi and requested permission for a second time to go and pursue the unfinished marriage arrangement and then return immediately. So, Nhial granted me one-month leave. Unfortunately, for the third time, I met Dr. Garang at the Kenya border town of Lokichogio on his way to Nairobi; he cancelled my permission and instructed me to do two things. The first was to go to Natinga and take some soldiers and search for a location that would be New Kush as SPLA headquarters after Natinga became the residence for families. So, I drove to Natinga and took Eng. Marial along with me to go and dig some boreholes for the new HQs. I completed the establishment of New Kush in two days' time and left one platoon under Monychol Monyjur to protect the rig and construct some houses as a base for Dr. Garang. The second part of the mission was

to go to Narus and take Sudan Medical Care Toyota and move to Morangapi, where A/Cdr George Eshuom would join and provide me with a guide from the Nyangathom tribe to take me to Kibish as the triangle between Southern Sudan, Ethiopia and Kenya, to re-establish harmonious relations between the new government in Ethiopia and the SPLM/A after three years of bitter relations. After two days on foot, I, with my two soldiers and one native, arrived early morning at 04:00 am. We chose that time for arrival because we had three rifles and one long-range radio communication which, if detected, could be a source of suspicion by our foes. We just entered a dry water stream and sat down quietly in silence to wait for the sunrise so that I could now go alone and introduce myself to the Ethiopian local commander.

Around 6:30 in the morning, I saw one Ethiopian soldier carrying a rifle and standing under the tree on duty, but I could not take courage to approach him. I decided to wait for any other person who could be a witness when I appeared to them. Just a few minutes later, another soldier appeared without a rifle, but carrying a water container in his hand, trying to wash his face. I changed my clothes to civilian ones and told my other comrades to wait in the dry stream. I decided to go to those two soldiers and introduce myself. As I was approaching them, one of the soldiers said "Quom," which means, "Stop," in Amharic. So, I stopped, "Wediaknow?"; "Where are you going?" "Ingedanign Alkut"; "I am a guest," I said. "Na," he said, which means "Come." And so, I advanced to them and greeted them in Amharic so that they would feel at ease assuming that I was one of them. Then I told them that I wanted to see their commander. But one of them said, "Why?" I told them, "Melik align Ke SPLA." The soldier with water in his hand took me and seated me next to the officer's tent and told me to wait there. He went and woke up the 1st Lt. Officer, who appeared later to be an intelligence officer. He investigated me further. Then he ordered tea for me. Many of them now started surrounding me listening on my conversation because they were interested in knowing more about the SPLA forces. A few minutes later, one of them came out from the tent and the other soldiers started to disappear. Then I knew that the overall commander might be coming. He greeted me in Amharic and I responded to him in the same language. After he asked a few questions, he called for one of the soldiers and ordered breakfast for me and him, but I told him I had two soldiers with me. He instructed the soldier to prepare a meal for the three people.

After I took tea, I told him that my Commander-in-Chief, Dr. John Garang, met with President Meles Zenawi in Kampala during a Pan-African meeting last year and they agreed to re-establish relations between the government of Ethiopia and the SPLM/A. But there had been no communication from Addis Ababa since then. So, he sent me to come to their base and send a message to

Addis Ababa about how we could establish our relations. I remained under that tree until he finished his communication with Addis Ababa, then he came back and asked me whether the other comrades had also come. I told him that they had not, but that I would go and see them across the dry stream. At around midday, the commander gave me two soldiers to escort me across to where my two soldiers were. They had relocated into old school buildings that were abandoned during the war and remained without roofs because citizens were starting to pass by and they feared their rifles and radio communication would be reported.

Among the questions I was asked was where Mengistu Hailemariam's soldiers were who had run with the SPLA? They also asked whether there was an SPLA training centre where they were training Ethiopian opposition? But I responded that there was no presence of any Ethiopian opposition in our territory, nor did we have a training centre after we had abandoned our main training centres inside Ethiopia, the Bonga and Dima training centres. I told them that it was for this reason that we were interested in re-establishing our relations so that we regain our old training centres and work together.

I told the soldiers that the discussion was a little tough because the Ethiopians had a real fear of the SPLA bringing Mengistu back to Ethiopia. I told them that we would remain inside the walls of the compound until later that evening. We could move out later and sleep outside, but we had to get in early and conceal our rifles and radio until we built trust with them.

After the two Ethiopian soldiers went back to their base and left me behind with my comrades, I erected my radio antenna, installed my radio, and began communicating with Amat Malual in Nairobi, who was with Dr. John Garang. So, he passed the handset to Dr. Garang. A voice came, "Hello! This is Green on the line, Blue." He gave himself the code name, "Green," and mine, "Blue," when he gave me the map for a mission. I responded, "Yes, I hear you Green." He said, "What is the situation?" I proceeded to report to him that I had arrived early that morning at dawn and met with the Ethiopian force commander by the name Berhe who had promised to send a message to Addis Ababa about my arrival and our intention, and that he said he would let me know their response in two days' time. With an excited voice, Green asked, "How did they receive you?" I told him that it was at first a little challenging, but that I managed to neutralize their fear that we had Mengistu's forces around in the SPLA areas. So, Green told me to please keep assuring them and that we would talk the following day. The following day, I received a message that was sent out by the Commander-in-Chief's station informing all SPLA units that he had sent Blue to the Ethiopian border at the triangle and that he had met with the Ethiopian commander at the border. The message read further saying that we were now

going to re-establish our relations with Ethiopia and the situation would soon change. Dr. Garang was aware of the thinking of the SPLA soldiers that if we resumed our relations with Ethiopia, automatically the New Sudan vision would be sustained.

The new government in Addis Ababa did not believe me that the SPLA was not accommodating the previous regime forces in their areas. We spent two months engaging with the local commander and commander Berhanu, known as Wedmedin, who came from Addis to Omorate. When I realized that there was need for building trust, I decided to begin intercepting Sudanese military communication along the Ethiopian border and provide the local commander with information which he passed on to his HQs in Addis. After two weeks, Berhanu came back and told me that they were happy with the information that I was providing on the situation along their border with Sudan. He further indicated that they were studying the situation and that there was possibility of cooperation. A month later, I received ten trucks full with ammunition and they asked me whether it was possible for the trucks to pass. I confirmed to them yes, it was possible. I took the first consignment to Kapoeta. Dr. Garang was very happy with the success of communication. He began planning a counter attack against Kapoeta immediately. After 26 days, I arrived at Natinga and was received by the Commander-in-Chief with pleasure. I told him that there was more ammunition which remained behind that needed to be lifted quickly before the road became too muddy. So, he ordered me to take ammunition to the Junction of Kapoeta where the forces were being gathered for Kapoeta. After the second consignment and our successfully establishing relations at the border, Commander Dr. Garang decided to join me along the Ethiopian border, where I established a base. After his visit to the area, he ordered me to proceed to Addis and secure the cooperation of the leadership in Addis for the SPLM to fully establish an office in Addis Ababa. He gave me 400 dollars as my pocket money and told me to search for Abdul Mohamed and Dr. Taban whom he believed would assist me while in Addis Ababa.

I went to Addis and put up in a small hotel. Days later, I moved to Deng Alor's father-in-law until I could get in contact with those whom Dr. Garang had recommended.

While I was in Ato Yetebarek house, I began communication with Gen. Berhanu at the Ministry of Defence and told him that I had come to Addis for further consultation. So, he told me that he would inform his leadership of my presence. I remained for a week with no communication.

While waiting, I reported to Dr. Garang that I had moved to Deng's in-laws' house because the funds I had received from him were gone. He told me that I should continue communicating with the Ministry of Defence. After

three weeks, I was called to the Ministry of Defence, and Gen. Hayelum Arraya informed me that they were going to send some military delegation to meet with the SPLA and organize the possibility of training SPLA forces before further delivery of logistical support. I reported to the Commander-in-Chief who organized a force in Murangipi to meet with them. After the delegation came back, both Ethiopian defence and Eritrea military attaché Lt. Col We Berhe organized a second visit to Murangipi with some trainers from both countries. After their return, I was provided now with radio communication and a house to use as my office and residence. While training was going on, I intensified my communication with a wider group within the Ministry of Defence and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to build confidence that SPLA was a true friend that would work for the mutual benefit of the two countries. That was how I reestablished the relation between Ethiopia, Eritrea and SPLA and began new relations fully. It was six months later that I found Abdul Mohamed and John Taban, whom Dr. Garang had asked me to look for to help in securing support for us. Later, I met with Dr. Luka Manoja who became a full supporter of my activities in Addis Ababa.

1996 Recruitment in Panyido

After successful training in Murangipi was concluded, Dr. Garang ordered me to mobilize a force in the two former refugee camps of Panyido and Dima. After I established a good relationship with an Ethiopian military intelligence personnel, who became a good friend, we discussed the possibility of visiting Panyido and Dima for recruitment of former SPLA forces that were left behind. He agreed and assigned one of his officers to accompany me to these refugee camps and meet with the authorities there. In Panyido, I met with the refugees' chairperson who happened to be a diehard supporter of Riek Machar and did not want any coming back of the SPLA led by Garang to the sector. It took me one week of discussions with him, while recruiting more sources within the refugee camp to mobilize people for SPLA support. At the end of the week, I managed to divide the opinion in the refugee camp and got people who supported the idea of rejoining the SPLA. I had my radio communication and continued reporting my activities in the refugee camp to Dr. Garang.

After the second week, I decided to go to Dima to make the same mobilization for SPLA support. While I was in Dima, I encountered a series of challenges from refugee members who were totally against Dr. Garang and wanted only Riek Machar. I realized that while I was in Panyido, those who were against my program decided to communicate their opposition to their friends in Dima. I therefore found them ready for confrontation. Some of

them decided to kill me if I didn't move out of Dima quickly. But I was with the Ethiopian intelligence officer, whom I used to threaten this group. I reported to him that there were people who were trying to fight us the following day if we held a rally with the refugees. The intelligence officer called a meeting in the evening with the local police commander and requested they arrest anybody who would interrupt my work. He told them that the instruction from Addis was that Arop must do what he wanted to do peacefully and therefore no one should stop him. The police called the refugee chairperson who was adamant that I leave the camp immediately. He was arrested the same night, which scared many of the refugees. I remained in the camp for five days doing political work and recruiting refugees to support SPLA. After five days, I told those who had agreed to rejoin the SPLA to continue to do their mobilization until I returned from Addis. While in Addis, I decided to send some support to cells both in Panyido and in Dima to continue their recruitment. Lastly, I went back with twenty trucks to Panyido to transport those who were ready to join military training in Dima and move them to the Dima training center. I moved those in the Dima refugee camp on foot to the training camp. I managed to recruit 7,000 and put them under training for three months. Later, they were used for the Blue Nile operations and they captured Kurmuk and Yabus.

IGAD Mediation on Sudan Peace

In 1998, the IGAD mediation on the conflict in the Republic of The Sudan, between Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army led by Dr. John Garang de Mabior as its Commander-in-Chief and President Omer has El-Bashir's regime in Khartoum led by the National Islamic Front (NIF) party resumed. As the representative of the SPLM in Ethiopia, where the talks were being conducted, I became a member of the Secretariat for the SPLM/A delegation headed by Martin Okuruk for the negotiations. The mediators were Ministers of Foreign Affairs of IGAD countries, headed by the Ethiopian Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, H.E. Seyoum Mesfin; deputized by the Eritrean Minister of Foreign Affairs, H.E. Petros Solomon; while the members of the Ministerial Committee were Djibouti, Kenya, and Uganda.

Following the opening statements of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs and the warring parties, the Chair requested each party to present its position paper. SPLM delegation under comrade Salva presented a 32-page document incorporating the last position presented in Abuja 1 and 2. Unfortunately, Sudan argued that they were insulted because SPLM referred to them as National Islamic Front (NIF) and therefore they wanted to leave the negotiations if that

reference to them was not deleted. SPLM delegation responded by arguing that they did not see what was wrong with the name when it was the name the ruling party had itself chosen. But Sudan insisted that they be referred to as the Government of Sudan. The matter took a long time to be sorted out until the Chair called for an hour break to conduct shuttle diplomacy with the parties. After the mediators finished their consultation, I was called by Minister Seyoum who requested I arrange a room for him to meet with Comrade Salva and Deng Alor for consultation.

There was a small office inside the ECA which I prepared to receive the son of Dr. Luka Manoja who was brought from Khartoum by a member of the Sudanese government delegation known as Agnes Lokudo. I took Comrade Salva and Deng to that office and called Seyoum to join them secretly without Sudan Government's knowledge. It was in this room that Seyoum told both comrades that Sudan was not ready for a solution and that they were shopping for an alternative forum as a delay tactic. So, he requested Comrade Salva that they not provide a card for the Sudan to leave the talks. He therefore advised that SPLM delegation should delete the word NIF and replace it with the government of Sudan as they requested. Seyoum said they had prepared a document called Non-Paper which contained self-determination for South Sudan and Abyei and popular consultation for the two areas as the only way forward for the resolution of the Sudan problem, although they knew that Sudan might not accept that proposal. If the SPLM deleted the word NIF, then the mediators would impose the document on the parties as a take-it-or-leave-it proposal. He gave the document to Salva to quickly pass through and give his comments. Comrade Salva read the document and passed it to Deng Alor who read it and made some comments which Seyoum accepted. Both Seyoum and the two comrades agreed on the strategy and dispersed before the time elapsed. After we finished with Seyoum, I told Comrade Salva that I was going to call Minister Agnes to bring the boy to me and that it was a good opportunity for them to talk to Minister Agnes to stop campaigning (debating) against the interest of South Sudan. Salva agreed. So, I called Agnes. She brought the boy, but she was surprised that she found Salva and Deng Alor in the room. They took the opportunity and reasoned with her to stop her from talking on behalf of the Sudan government. They requested she be silent and not be used by Mustapha Osman who was leading the Sudan delegation. While they were in discussion, I stepped out and met with the Sudanese Ambassador to Ethiopia Osman el-Saed. Unfortunately, he saw Agnes coming out with Salva and Deng Alor. Agnes told them that she was now betrayed because the Ambassador was going to report to Mustapha about our meeting. Indeed, it was this incident that

led to the removal of Minister Agnes from leading the Sudan peace delegation and Agnes being sent to Congo as Sudan ambassador.

After one hour, the mediators called for the resumption of the meeting where they announced that SPLM delegation had agreed to delete the word NIF and replace it with the government of Sudan delegation. The Chair also informed Sudan delegation that they had realized that they had not signed their position paper which they had presented to SPLM delegation and that they had only a stamped copy. So, they requested the Sudan delegation to sign the document, stamp it and officially give it to SPLM head of delegation. Before they presented the Non-Paper, they requested that the parties have a break and edit their documents. The meeting would then resume the following day. Seyoum wanted to brief the Prime Minister on his secret agreement with the SPLM delegation and to give a chance for Comrade Salva to consult with Dr. Garang who was in Nairobi. The following day, after a long discussion of the parties' divergent positions, the chair presented their Non-Paper that contained self-determination and popular consultation. Sudan delegation argued that they were not mandated to discuss the two areas but only to discuss the problem of South Sudan. A situation that forced Yusif to request Malik and Deng Alor to go back and continue their fight as Sudan was not ready to be discussed. But Deng refused. Sudan wanted to use the issue of the two areas as means to break down the talks. Sudan requested further consultation with their capital first before commenting on the paper. The SPLM delegation also did the same. Although they had already had consultations with the mediators and had agreed to the paper, they did not want to appear to have immediately agreed with the mediators. Lastly, the mediators gave two weeks for the parties to conduct their consultations with their leadership and meet in Machakos in the next session. It was during the next talks that Sudan managed to split the matter into South Sudan, the two areas and Abyei.

The Negotiation of Ethiopian Opposition

The end of the Abyei conference in 2003, which gave birth to the Abyei road map, ended with a diplomatic scuttle. The flight of the Russian Antivov-12, transporting members of the conference back to Nairobi from Agok Conference, took me to Nairobi Wilson Airport. As a result of the excitement that the conference had ended successfully to the satisfaction of all participants, I did not feel the trembling of the plane until it landed in Nairobi peacefully. Upon arrival in Nairobi, I met with Ethiopian businessman, who reported about my arrival to the Ethiopian Ambassador in Kenya. The Ambassador called me and requested an urgent meeting in Pan Afrique Hotel. I had no idea what was

happening. I had no clue about what was brewing while I was engaged in the conference in Agok. So, I was wondering what could be an urgent matter that the Ambassador did not even want me to rest from the long trembling flight. At exactly 12:00 noon, the Ethiopian Ambassador arrived at the hotel where I was taking a rest by the swimming pool, trying to recover from the marathon conference from the village to urban life.

Without the prior niceties of diplomacy, the Ambassador began by saying that the Minister of Foreign Affairs, H.E. Seyoum Mesfin, wanted to talk to me on a very important and urgent matter that needed quick attention. He picked his phone from the table and began calling his Minister who immediately responded within the first two rings as if he was on a standby waiting for the call. "Hello," said the Minister, "Did you meet him?" came his questions. The Ambassador said "Yes, he is here; go ahead with him." At the time I was attending Abyei development conference in Agok in 2003, comrade James Hoth attacked Akobo and captured Ethiopian opposition leader, Thokwath Paul, in Akobo, and transferred him to Rumbek. The incident triggered a serious challenge to the relations between the SPLM/A and the Ethiopian government. Although it was the SPLA forces under the command of James Hoth that attacked the joint position of Ethiopian opposition and Dr. Riek Machar's elements, which were being supported by the Sudanese army, it appeared that the presence of Eritrean trainees in Akobo was not clear to the attacking force until they had captured Thokwath and the Eritrean trainees had already escaped and arrived at New Kush which was the SPLA GHQs and a base of our Commander-in-Chief, Dr. Garang. When Eritrean trainees were being processed to go to Nairobi at the border, they were discovered by the Kenyan security who shared the information with Ethiopia, giving them a clear picture of the SPLA's involvement in training in Akobo of Eritrean forces. The fact was that commander James Hoth who attacked Akobo and captured Thokwath was not aware of the involvement of the SPLA in the conspiracy. The incident had occurred a few months earlier when I was summoned by Ethiopian Chief-of-Staff who accused SPLA of supporting their opposition, which I totally denied. I requested James Hoth to join me in Gambella to testify as the accused officer. James and I were unaware of any involvement of SPLA in coordinating the training of the Ethiopian opposition in Akobo.

The discovery of this clandestine training program had twofold implications for the SPLA's relations with Ethiopia which I was required to address as the SPLM/A representative. The Ethiopians were very disappointed by the incident. First the capture of their enemy and his transfer to Rumbek without handing him over to their forces who supplied ammunition for the attack of Akobo was considered an affront. The other part of their disappointment was

their realization that SPLA was involved in this transportation of the Eritrean trainees to New Kush and to Kenya. When I talked to the Minister by phone, he asked me where Dr. Garang was because Meles wanted to see him urgently on the issue of the captured opposition leader, I told him that Dr. Garang had just left Italy on his way to Asmara and would proceed the same day to Nairobi. Seyoum demanded that Thokwath be sent back to Ethiopia immediately, if we intended to continue to be friends. I assured him that there was no problem; I would wait for Garang and the issue would be resolved.

When Dr. Garang arrived at his residence in Nairobi, he found Dr. Justin Yac waiting for him because the Ethiopian Ambassador was pressuring him on the matter. I was also in the house waiting while taking tea outside with the guards. A few minutes later, Chol Akuei called me and said that the Chairman wanted to talk to me first before he answered Dr. Justin's question on the matter. After I joined them, Dr. John narrated his experience in Asmara on the same issue. The Eritrean President intimated to him that if SPLA handed over Thokwath to the Ethiopian government, they would react by clearing SPLA forces around the Eritrean border immediately. According to Dr. John, he escaped Eritrea by promising them that he was coming to resolve the issue amicably. So, he asked me about the situation in Addis Ababa, what was the thinking of Samora and the Ethiopian leadership? I narrated the concern of the Ethiopian government that they had heard that SPLA wanted to hand over Thokwath to Eritrea. That would be against the national interest of Ethiopia.

Ethiopia believed that some officers in the SPLA had cooperated with the Eritrean government to train their enemies; therefore, I suggested to Garang that it would be a wrong decision to surrender him to Asmara and create enmity with Ethiopia. So, I advised the Commander-in-Chief that it was better for him to go to Addis and meet with the Prime Minister himself and explain the complexities around the matter. I further told Garang that if SPLA handed over Paul to Eritrea, both the Ethiopian and South Sudanese Nuers would join hands against both SPLA and the Ethiopian government and make the situation more complex. But sending out Thokwath to either Nairobi or somewhere else could address the concern of both friendly countries and avoid any confrontation. Garang agreed with my analysis of the situation and requested Justin Yac to organize our trip to Addis to meet with the Ethiopian Prime Minister before the release of the Ethiopian rebel leader.

In Addis Ababa we met with the Prime Minister and the two leaders discussed the situation as I had suggested. Garang requested the Prime Minister send some forces to join the SPLA to secure the border totally and avoid intrusion from the rebels. It was clear from the Prime Minister's concern that their relationship with Eritrea was getting sour and needed both SPLA and

Ethiopia to defend the common territory. It was after the discussion in Addis that Garang ordered the release of Paul and he informed the leadership of Eritrea about his release to a different country. It was not an easy situation, but SPLA diplomacy in the region was very strong and contributed to peace and stability in the region, which also paid attention to the real threat of the Islamic Front from the Sudan.

On 28 August, 2013, I visited Juba with Madam Azeib Musfin, a member of the Political Bureau of the Ethiopia People's Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (EPDRF), who was holding the position of Economic Officer in the party. Madam Azeib was the widow of Meles Zenawi, the late Prime Minister of Ethiopia, who was very close to South Sudanese leadership. The visit was for Comrade Azeib to go and talk with President Salva Kiir and other members of the SPLM leadership regarding how the two parties could partner economically to strengthen the relationship of the two friendly parties of Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) and EPDRF. The fact that she was heading up the economic department was a decision aimed to follow up the implementation of the vision of her husband, the late Prime Minister, who envisioned the integrated economic development of our region. Unfortunately, Madam Azeib's mission could not succeed because of dramatic developments. The same evening that she and I arrived and were watching local news on the national television, the breaking news was a Presidential Decree dissolving the entire Cabinet of the Government of the Republic of South Sudan. As a diplomat, I felt that there was something serious happening that might lead to serious problems. So, after I dropped the guest in her hotel, I went around looking for correct information about the essence of the decision to dissolve the Cabinet.

I went to Deng Alor's residence and found Pagan Amum, Dr. Majak d'Agot, Dr. Cirino Hiteng, General Oyai Deng Ajak and General Gier Chuang sitting with the former Minister of Cabinet Affairs. Deng Alor was one of the first two ministers suspended in the allegation of money embezzlement. Many people believed that was a cover for the decree to be passed, because people in South Sudan trusted Deng Alor as the only person who could advise the President against making a decision that could spark fire. Unfortunately, Deng became the first victim to pave the way for those who were interested in changing the influential SPLM circle around the President. When I entered the salon where they were analysing the situation, I found Gen. Chuang reflecting what he had told his group before, that the suspension of Deng Alor was, he believed, the starting point of the crisis in South Sudan. When I interjected by asking why Gen. Gier had such a belief, he responded that Deng Alor was the only person left as the middle man running between all of us trying to bridge

the differences. Those who wanted the change, however, discovered that they started attacking him to open the door for the President to move forward with their plan. Gier said the chemistry between President Kiir and his Vice President became active and there was no way they were going to continue working together. He said that although the President had formed a crisis committee led by Deng Alor on economic issues, and Deng was also intending to mediate on the souring tensions between the President and his Vice President, he was sure that those who were interested in seeing relations inflamed would not allow him to do so. He would end up being mistrusted by both gentlemen and that would spark off the chemistry reaction. After moving back and forth in analysing the repercussions of the Decree, I told the group that I would be meeting the President early the next morning at 08:00 am with Madam Azeib on the mission I had come for. I requested permission to leave because it was getting late and I wanted to retire to bed. In line with my character as an invisible diplomat, I had absorbed all analysis. While on my way to the lodging place, I was engaged in a mental SWOT analysis. Later in my bed, I outlined what I believed was the way forward to at least defuse the situation and make it short of sparking.

The following day, before my guest and I moved to J-1, the Office of the President, we tried to reflect on the Decree because she was doubting whether the President could be in a position to see her. She said that as a politician she understood what it meant to dissolve an entire cabinet and remain without ministers. According to her there was no need to continue to ask for a meeting. I tried to console her by saying that there was no problem and that the President would see her in a few minutes. Lastly, she said she was not going to raise what she had come for, but would make it a courtesy call to greet him and wish him peaceful management of the situation. Just before she completed her sentence, I responded to the call from the Chief of Protocol in the office of the President informing us that His Excellency would be on the way; so, we should start moving to the office. Both of us got up as the soldiers had orders and stepped out to the parking area where the assigned car was waiting. We got into the car in silence because both of us were trying to organize our thoughts before meeting the President. I decided to see the President alone first to brief him on the nature of her visit, although he was already aware since he had met her in Addis Ababa a few months earlier. First, I wanted to inform the President about the decision the members of the Political Bureau had made as a result of the last night's Decree. Secondly, I wanted to seek permission for him to meet with Deng Alor. These were my secret objectives. When we reached the office, I was told that the plan was exactly as I had suggested, that I would see the President first alone.

When I met the President, I started by relating the story of a Dinka gentleman by the name Chol Mong Jok, who, on entering Wau town to find so many people on the move, said how unlucky he was that he had arrived only to find everyone evacuating the town. So, I told the President that I arrived and found the government dissolved. The President laughed and made no comment. Lastly, I broke the silence by reporting to the President that Madam Azeib decided not to communicate the message which she had brought from Addis Ababa to the President. Secondly, I explained that she made that decision because of the Presidential Decree, which as a politician, she understood and did not want to complicate the situation for the President. So, I recommended to the President that he meet with her alone and try to convince her to discuss her mission, which the President would appreciate. After that, I went out to call her and escort her to the President. Then I left them alone. I went to the Minister's office where I was able to chat with those in the office of the President to get a feeling of what was expected to happen in light of the Decree. But 15 minutes later, the protocol officer entered the office and told me that the President was calling me. So, I rushed back to the President's office. He told me that the guest had refused totally to tell him what she had come for. I supported the guest and told the President that they would come back when the new cabinet was in place. After I finished with the issue of the guest, I switched the language into Dinka and passed the message that I was going to see Deng Alor first before taking her to the airport. Immediately the President passed his message to me requesting Deng see him that evening at 20:00 pm. It was exactly what I was trying to achieve. I told the President that I would inform Deng and convey the response to Bona Gong, the President's Special Secretary.

My guest and I went to Deng Alor's residence because she wanted to pay a courtesy call to him and his wife, Misrak. Once again, we found Deng sitting with Cirino Hiteng, Mijak Agot, and Oyai Deng, all of whom had been recently dismissed along with the rest of the Cabinet. After my guest stepped into another room with Misrak, I passed the message to Deng that the President wanted to see him later in that evening at 8:00 pm. This message irritated Dr. Cirino who reacted, "Please Ambassador, don't sell out! Deng is a national leader; this is not a family affair." I was shocked by the statement, but I applied my invisible way by absorbing the reaction of Dr. Hiteng as an aggrieved person. I continued to explain the President's message and how it came about. Deng intervened by asking Dr. Cirino to allow the message to be passed. So, I continued with the explanation to some clarifications Deng was trying to know. Lastly, Deng said there was need to involve Pagan Amum to get his opinion, but he did not in principle have a problem with the idea. Therefore, Deng picked up his phone and rang Amum and told him to immediately come. He told

him that there was a message from the President. A few minutes later, Pagan Amum arrived at Deng's house where the group was gathered. Deng told him that the President wanted to see him in the evening. He also informed him of the reaction from Cirino and Majak. Now, he wanted Pagan's opinion. Pagan immediately responded positively by telling Deng to please prepare to go, then went further by asking Deng and the others to devise a strategy of discussion with the President and to support Deng with ideas. After the group reached the consensus that Deng was to meet the President, I picked up the phone and called Bona, the President's assistant, and informed him to tell the President that Deng would be going at 8 pm as he had requested. Unfortunately, the meeting could not take place until the following day because Comrade Salva was meeting with Gen. Pieng who came later and reported that the President was expecting Deng in his house, but I told him that the bodyguard did not call back until the late hours and said the President had apologized because it was getting to midnight. The meeting was rescheduled for another day when it eventually took place.

On December 15th, 2013, at 6:00 am before breakfast, I received a telephone call from General Mac Paul, who was Chief of Military Intelligence in the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) General Headquarters, asking for Chief of General Staff James Hoth Mai, who happened to be in Addis Ababa for his Master's graduation with the former Minister of Cabinet Affairs, Deng Alor, who was also graduating with him. He told me that the situation in Juba was brewing. He therefore wanted the Chief of Staff, James Hoth, and Minister Deng Alor to return immediately to Juba to rescue the situation. I responded by saying that I was still at home but would leave immediately to their hotel to inform them, although I knew that the plan of the two gentlemen was to go back two days later. While on my way to the hotel, I received another telephone call from General Pieng Deng Kuol, the Inspector General of the Police (IGP), requesting to talk to Minister Deng Alor about the situation in Juba. After speeding to Saint Maria Hotel, I called Minister Deng and Chief of Staff Hoth requesting they come down for a message from the two Generals, Gen Pieng and Gen Mac.

I took a few steps upstairs to the restaurant, where I then waited for the two gentlemen to join me for breakfast. I had already arranged to get them tickets, should they decide to leave immediately to Juba. They came down and asked me what was happening and why the generals from Juba were calling them so early in the morning. I replied that it seemed things were not going well, following the opening of the National Liberation Council Conference of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) on Saturday. I added that it was better they called at least one of the two generals to find out exactly the details of the situation. I

did not want to misquote them. Gen Hoth called a colleague and was informed that the situation had seriously deteriorated and required them to come back immediately. They were advised not to spend the night away, otherwise they would not reach the situation before explosion. General Pieng told me that Minister Deng Alor should go back immediately because he would be able to handle the situation of the two leaders, President Salva Kiir and Vice President Riek Machar, including their followers. But General Hoth said they did not have a reservation to leave immediately as their flight was scheduled for the following Tuesday 17th December. The police chief insisted that he needed to talk to the Minister. So, the Chief of Staff handed over the phone to Minister Deng Alor and started by asking where Dr. Riek and the President were, and whether both were going to attend the afternoon closing meeting. Gen Pieng responded by saying that he did not think it was a good idea for Dr. Riek to go to the conference, when the tension had reached its peak. So, Minister Deng told General Pieng that they would ask me to get them seats on the plane in the afternoon, since it was the only flight that day. He concluded by asking General Pieng to keep them posted on any situation. Minister Deng turned to me and asked me to get tickets so that they could leave immediately because both Generals believed the situation was getting out of hand. So, I made various contacts and succeeded in getting two seats from Ethiopian security, and they were rushed to the airport after everyone was already on board.

On the same day of December 15th 2013 at 8:15 pm I was at my dining table with the family, having supper after all the day's efforts to send the two gentlemen to Juba with deep concern over the situation at home. I received a telephone call from my brother, General Kuol Deng Abot (Kuol bi Ting) who was still struggling in bed, trying to recover from a double fracture of his legs, and who asked whether I was following the situation in Juba. He reported that there was shooting in the General HQs of Tiger Battalion, which was the Presidential Guard. I told him that both Deng and James Hoth had gone to Juba after Gen Pieng and Gen Mac called and reported the situation. My brother told me to take it easy, to call Juba, and to keep in touch with him.

I called James Hoth who answered after just a few rings, saying hello with a sad voice. The sounds of gunshots and bombs in the background made it difficult for him to listen well. He said there was serious fighting going on at the headquarters of the Tiger Division, which they were trying to control, he, Gen. Pieng, and Gen. Oyai Deng Ajak. They were trying to reach Taban Deng Gai to urge him to control the situation. I asked where the President and the Vice President Riek were and was told that nobody was accessing them. I hung up and called Minister Deng Alor who picked up his phone and reported that since their arrival in Juba, they had been trying to reach both the President

and the Vice President, but their efforts had so far failed and there was on-going shooting, and that he had told the UN Representative to reach both the President and Vice President so that they could address the media through FM to jointly call for calm.

I called my brother in Kampala and informed him about my conversation with the two Generals and the Former Minister of Cabinet Affairs, Deng Alor, and that they were trying to reach Taban Deng and Dr. Riek on the phone so that the situation could be brought under control before morning. I told him that the Minister had sent Hilda Johnson, the UN Special Representative in Juba, a message to go to the President at 7:00, pm, but that she had responded that it was not possible for her to reach the President because the guards had denied her access to the President's house. Meanwhile, Dr. Riek's whereabouts were unknown. I then drove my car at around 10:00 pm to the Desaligne Hotel where some of my former military colleagues in the struggle were working as security officers. They were on their way to Italy for training. My intention was to inform them about the situation in Juba. I knocked at the door of Erjok Bullen, who was dozing off, trying to sleep. He opened the door and said, "Hello Ambassador, is everything ok?" I told him that I was there to inform them about the fighting in Juba. Immediately, General Erjok felt fully awake and he suggested that we go to Ayor Akuoc's room and wake up the others. So, we went to Ayor's room and knocked on the door, which he immediately opened as he was already awake. Both of us started to analyse the situation and how it could be stopped, which was my main objective. Each one of them tried to call Juba to gather more information. At around 11:00 pm, it was reported that the fighting had subsided and both Generals were trying to assess the situation, while both leaders remained out of contact. So, I went back to my residence and asked my colleagues to converge in the Embassy early morning.

After things became clearer from all phone calls that I had with the Generals and the Minister, it became obvious that no one knew how to stop the shooting. I called the Ethiopian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dr. Tedros Adhanum, Ethiopian Chief of Staff, and the office of the Prime Minister to report to them that there was fighting going on in Juba between the Presidential guard and the guard of the Vice President Dr. Riek Machar. General Mohammed Yonis known as Samora, who was the Chief of General Staff of Ethiopian armed forces, asked me what Ethiopia could do and specifically whether the President could be reached by the Prime Minister to understand how to intervene. The Minister of Foreign Affairs tried to reach South Sudan Minister of foreign Affairs, Dr. Marial Benjamin, but could not. Lastly, he called me back and said his Prime Minister wanted to talk to the President and Vice President, but I told him that they weren't accessible at that time. The Minister asked me

to monitor the situation and keep him posted throughout the night. So, I was set to follow the situation throughout the night so that I would be on top of the situation for any possibilities of diplomatic intervention. I continued to update the Ethiopian leadership, in particular the Minister of foreign Affairs and the Chief of General Staff, about developments throughout the night.

On the 16th of December 2013, at 10 am, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Tedros, went to my residence to consult on what could be done about the situation in Juba, since the fighting was continuing. I received the Minister and escorted him to the salon where we sat. I called my wife to give them something to drink. The Minister started by asking how the situation was. I told him the situation had deteriorated that morning and that the fighting continued up to the time we were consulting. I told him there was need for Ethiopia or IGAD to fly to Juba to stop the fighting. Otherwise, the situation was totally out of control. Therefore, the only option was for IGAD countries to intervene immediately. The Minister agreed with me and started calling the Kenyan, Ugandan, Sudan and Djibouti Ministers of Foreign Affairs to converge in Addis in the afternoon, so that they would all move to Juba to rescue the situation. The regional ministers responded positively that they were ready to move immediately because they were also concerned.

On the 18th, I received a telephone call from China, Ambassador Seyoum Mesfin, who had received instructions from his Prime Minister Haile-Mariam Desaligne, to report to Addis Ababa for a mission to Juba. He told me that he had been ordered to go to Juba and was preparing to leave Beijing, but he wanted to see me before he met with the Prime Minister.

Following the arrival of Ambassador Seyoum to Addis Ababa, I called one of our Embassy staff by the name Bang Hoth who had been a security guard of Riek Machar. I got in contact with him through that channel for the first time after several days of disappearance from Juba. I received a telephone number of Dr. Riek from Bang Hoth.

Soon, I found myself in the position of having to organize a rescue mission of South Sudanese victims of what was being termed a baseless war between the two leaders. That was my first act, as an invisible diplomat, based in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. I took it upon myself to rescue those affected while getting out of Juba. At midnight of 11th January 2014, a telephone call woke me up. When I answered, I heard the sad news that if there was no action within two days to evacuate a minority group around Nasir, Akobo, and Jekou, history would record their demise as a dark and tragic event.

The call was from 1st Lt. Thomas Tut who was asked by the local commander of Pagak Post Col. Biel. Thomas who was one of the military intelligence officers assigned in Gambella/Ethiopia to coordinate along the

border between Ethiopia and South Sudan. The colonel reported to me that there was a serious problem in his post. He said the news from Juba had angered soldiers and the community in general and that the situation might already be out of his control. He said the community there wanted to retaliate against the minority Dinka and other tribes as a result of what had happened in Juba on the 15 December 2013. He stressed that I should not delay in taking action to evacuate the minorities from the areas of Pagak where he was assembling them. Otherwise they would not survive in next five days. His voice was of a seriously concerned commander who did not want to witness the stream of innocent blood flowing into the river. Although the colonel came from the same community that was trying to retaliate against innocent people, he did not want the disaster to occur. He stressed that the news arriving from Juba was that the Nuer community in Juba had been totally eliminated by either the Dinka or the government forces that created the anger in the community and among the soldiers.

Although I woke up from sleep, the worrying voice of the colonel alarmed me and I responded to him by requesting more information about the number of people he suspected needed to be evacuated and whether they were all assembled in one place so that they could be easily picked up. I also asked him how long he thought he could continue to contain the situation. The colonel said that he could contain the situation for five days and not more, otherwise those who had run away from Juba might arrive and aggravate the situation. As we did in the 1991 Itang evacuation, I promised the colonel that I would do something within those days and requested the commander to continue to assert himself and control the situation. I began consulting with my security officer in the embassy so that we could mobilize the money to hire buses for evacuation of these groups. Gen. Mahmoud Solomon, who was the head of technical attaché, immediately contributed fifteen thousand Biir, I requested my wife to contribute fifty thousand and I contributed one hundred thousand that made a total of 165,000 Biir, and sent it to one of my men in Gambella to hire twenty buses to move immediately to evacuate more than 500 from the danger. Within 24 hours we managed to evacuate the people from danger, but unfortunately, the officer that facilitated the evacuation was arrested when Riek Machar's forces arrived to the area, and was executed.

The Minister asked me to call my Minister, which I did. Minister Marial answered and I told him that I was with his counterparts trying to reach him. I proceeded to give the phone to Minister Tedros who told him that the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of IGAD had agreed to fly to Juba that afternoon and that he should inform the President about the decision. Dr. Marial welcomed the idea and told him that he was going to call the people around the President,

since the fighting was going on and there was no movement. He promised to call back with information. A few minutes later, before the Minister left the residence to go and brief his Prime Minister, the telephone call came in from Minister Marial. I picked up the phone and the minister asked me whether I was still with the Ethiopian Minister. I passed the phone. Dr. Marial said he had managed to contact President Salva Kiir Mayardit and that he had welcomed the idea of IGAD Council of Ministers visit to Juba.

The Ethiopian minister of foreign affairs immediately called his colleagues in IGAD capitals to invite them to Addis Ababa and then move together to Juba for an emergency meeting of the Council of Ministers with the authorities in South Sudan. The ministers visited Juba and met with the President and the political detainees. They decided to call for an extraordinary IGAD summit to address the grave situation in Juba. On the following day, they moved back to Addis and reported the situation to the Prime Minister who in turn sent out invitations for an extraordinary summit meeting in Juba.

I communicated the invitation to my authorities in Juba informing them that Head of State and Government of IGAD would be arriving to Juba on 25 December 2013. Although the President was planning to go to Bahr el Ghazal for Christmas, he cancelled his visit and accepted the plan of IGAD Head of States to meet in Juba. The Heads of State and Government arrived in Juba and met with the President. They requested to meet with the political detainees to fully understand the situation. After the meetings in Juba, the Heads of State and government decided to move to Nairobi, where they continued to develop their strategy for resolving the problem as soon as possible. The summit resolution was to appoint Amb. Seyoum Mesfin as Chief Mediator on South Sudan deputized by Gen. Lazaro Sumbeiywo of Kenya. It was the initiative of the Council of Ministers that resulted in the compromised peace agreement.

After the Heads of State of IGAD visited Juba, they decided to hold an Extra-Ordinary Summit in Nairobi on December 27th, 2013, to find a way of helping South Sudanese to restore peace in the country. Although the Chief Mediator had firsthand information, he continued to consult with me to give him the inside story of what I had obtained from the leadership. Even during the time that the Heads of State were meeting in Nairobi, they did not know where the former Vice President Dr. Riek's location was because he was on the move in the jungle towards Terekeka, where he had crossed to Bor without any communication.

A Dream so Long Deferred Finally Realized

The power of clandestine missions had consistently overridden my unfinished social leaves for not less than 10 years. It was early morning before the sunrise and before the clouds emerged in the Equatorial sky. I sat contemplating my life as an invisible diplomat. As the sun rose, a windy rain swept in that made it difficult to travel as there was no paved road. Under those circumstances, I left Natinga to Lokichogio base. I was given a leave of one month for the quest of a partner; I left Natinga on my way to Nairobi with the intention of getting married. I arrived at the Kenyan border town of Lokichogio, which is the frontier with South Sudan, to process my travel papers. I drove to the SRRA offices and was received with warm welcome by a friend who invited me for breakfast since I was to leave early morning. All the while I suspected I would be called for another mission, but that was not God's plan. This time, my life as an invisible diplomat was suspended, and I was granted the right to plant my own personal flag, not that of my nation, on a small piece of land that my wife and I would build up together as a home. Many years later, with children in university and a home that I managed to build with my wife, I see that all our clandestine missions, our struggles and our claims of liberation, would only have meaning when our people are free to marry, build homes, and educate their children in peace.

Part Three:

Dialogue on Abyei

Chapter Seven:

Dialogue with Bona Malual

Francis Mading Deng

The Context of Bona Malual's Book

Bona Malual Madut Ring's latest book, *Abyei of the Ngok Dinka: Not Yet South Sudan*, is as remarkable for its insights and staunch commitment to the cause of the Ngok Dinka of Abyei, as it is a bitter reflection of personal grievances against a number of Ngok Dinka members of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement and Army (SPLM/A), specifically Deng Alor Kuol, my cousin, Pieng Deng Majok, and Dr. Luka Biong Deng Majok, both my half-brothers from the same father. In his book, Bona accuses them not only of offensive behavior against him, but also of having damaged the legitimate cause of their Ngok Dinka people. These are individuals who, as members of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement and Army (SPLM/A), which championed the struggle of South Sudanese for over twenty years, played a crucial role in both political and military aspects of the struggle.

Deng Alor was a young diplomat in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Sudan when he decided to join the liberation movement. He was for many years the manager of the office of the SPLM/A leader, Dr. John Garang de Mabior, acted as Governor of Bahr el Ghazal during the struggle, and successively held the portfolios of Regional Cooperation, Cabinet Affairs and Foreign Affairs in

the Government of National Unity and the Government of South Sudan after the independence.

Deng Alor not only played a crucial role in promoting the cause of South Sudan in Africa and around the world, but was also a key member of the SPLM negotiating team in all the talks leading to the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement – CPA. At the time of writing, he was the Minister of Foreign Affairs, occupying a position given the Former Detainees (FDs) by the 2015 Peace Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan. Since some of his fellow FDs are active in the opposition outside the country, this makes him vulnerable to critics who perceive him as a member of the opposition in the government.

Pieng Deng was a student in the Faculty of Engineering in the University of Khartoum where he was first in the class. Although he had dinner with my family the night before he left to join the rebellion, he never hinted to us his intentions. Many years later, he apologized to me for that. But of course, I fully understood his silence to be the nature of the adventure. Informing elders risks being advised against rebelling. Pieng was clearly determined to rebel and soon rose to important commands during the struggle. After independence, he became Deputy Chief of Staff of the SPLA and Inspector General of Police.

Over the years, I have witnessed and heard of Pieng's popularity with SPLA soldiers, both during the war and long afterwards. When I was Permanent Representative of South Sudan to the United Nations, UN officials who visited South Sudan always reported very positively about Pieng's work without knowing my relationship with him. I would in the end reveal my relationship to him not only to express my appreciation, but also in the interest of transparency. Pieng was later removed from his post for still mysterious reasons, but generally believed to be part of a plan to remove the Ngok Dinka from positions of responsibility in the government of South Sudan.

Dr. Luka Biong graduated from the Faculty of Economics and Social Studies at the University of Khartoum where he was first in the class, was appointed to the Faculty and the University of el Gezira, and sent for post graduate studies in Brussels, Belgium. I had just secured financial support for his Ph.D studies when he joined the rebels. He too left without letting me know his plans. Like Pieng, he later apologized for that, but I also fully understood why he did what he did.

Luka held a number of senior positions in the struggle and played an active role in the peace talks and constitution drafting. He established the South Sudanese center for documentation and statistics, which has become a major institution of state in South Sudan. Luka held the positions of Minister in the Office of the President in Juba and of Cabinet Affairs in the Government

of National Unity in Khartoum. When the President appointed him Minister in his Office, I expressed my appreciation to him not so much because Luka was my brother, but primarily because of what I had heard about the positive difference he was making. The President told me that he had wanted to appoint Luka earlier, but that there had been resistance from quarters he did not specify. After leaving the government, Luka was appointed Professor of Economics at the University of Juba where he headed the Center for Peace and Development Studies, until he was compelled to leave by political intrigues, again believed to be part of the marginalization of the Ngok Dinka.

These brief biographical accounts illustrate the broader role the Ngok Dinka played as part and parcel of the people of South Sudan. Both the late leader of SPLM/A, Dr. John Garang de Mabior, and the current leader, President Salva Kiir Mayardit, lavishly praised to me the valorous and heroic role played by the Ngok Dinka in the war of liberation, which won them distinguished positions in the political and military leadership of the SPLM/A and the government of South Sudan.

The fact that Ngok leaders continued to play a leading role in the government of independent South Sudan, combined with the unresolved status of their area, made these leaders be viewed ambivalently by some Southerners, especially those who competitively saw the leaders as having a comparative advantage over themselves. The fact that this was due to their own merits was hardly acknowledged by their adversaries. In a way, this makes them victims of both the crisis situation in their area and the resentment of those who see them as not strictly South Sudanese, yet wielding undue power in the country.

It should be recalled that the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) that ended the more than twenty-year civil war between North and South Sudan included the Abyei Protocol which stipulated that the nine Chiefdoms of the Ngok Dinka would determine by a referendum whether to remain under the administration of the North, to which the British annexed their area in 1905, or revert to the South. The referendum was to be exercised at the same time with the referendum by which the South was to determine whether to remain united with the North or become an independent state. South Sudan referendum was held in January 2011 and became effective on July 9 of the same year, when independence was declared.

The referendum on the status of Abyei has been blocked by Sudan. And on October 30, 2013, the Ngok Dinka organized their own referendum in which they voted overwhelmingly to join the independent South Sudan. That referendum has not been recognized by the Sudan or South Sudan, nor by the International Community.

Bona Malual and the Ngok Dinka of Abyei

Bona Malual is not only a leader of his Twich Dinka community, with which the Ngok Dinka closely identify, but is a prominent figure in the Greater Bahr el Ghazal region, South Sudan in general, and indeed the whole Sudan before independence. After a course in journalism in Indiana University in the United States, Bona returned to the Sudan and became actively engaged in politics. He was a founding member of the Southern Front of which he was the first Secretary General. With the return of democracy after the overthrow of General Ibrahim Abboud's dictatorship in 1964, he ran for parliament and won the seat of his Twich constituency.

Although our relationship goes back to our childhood, it was when Bona Malual visited the United States in the mid-1960s as a member of parliament that we reconnected. I visited him in New York and he paid me a return visit in New Haven, where I was doing my post graduate studies at Yale University Law School.

After obtaining my doctorate, I joined the United Nations Secretariat in New York in 1967 as a Human Rights Officer. In 1969, my brother, Dr. Zackariah Bol, who was interning in medicine in the United Kingdom, and I returned to the Sudan to attend to our father who was seriously ill. Jaafar Nimeiri had just seized power through a military coup and dissolved parliament. Although Bona was no longer in government, he demonstrated strong solidarity with us, our father and our family, and did all he could officially and personally to assist us in every way. We took our father to Cairo, where he died shortly after, and returned the body home for the full rites of burying a Paramount Chief.

Shortly after my return to the United States, Bona came to pursue his studies at St. John's University and later joined Columbia University for a Master's degree in Journalism and International Relations. That is when our friendship deepened and we developed close collaboration in our political activities. Ironically, it was under Nimeiri that we both joined the government. Having contributed to the peace process that resulted in the Addis Ababa Agreement of 1972, we were both offered positions at about the same time. With some hesitation, Bona accepted the position of Deputy Minister for Information and Culture, quickly rose to the level of State Minister, and eventually became full Cabinet Minister in that Ministry. After declining a number of offers, I eventually accepted the position of Ambassador to the Scandinavian Countries. Initially, in 1970, I was asked to be Deputy Head of Mission in our London Embassy in the status of Minister Plenipotentiary. But the peace agreement had not yet been concluded and the war was still raging, although it was ebbing. I politely declined. After the Addis Ababa Agreement, I was offered the position

of Province Judge in our then Province of Kordofan, but I did not find it suitable to my situation then. The offers of Ambassador and Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs came in quick succession. Having just married an American, I settled for the Ambassadorship as a less drastic departure from the cultural context with which she was familiar.

As Bona was appointed Deputy Minister of Information and Culture at the same time, my wife Dorothy and I travelled to the Sudan together with him to assume our new assignments. After my Scandinavian posting, I served as Ambassador in Canada and the United States and as Minister of State for Foreign Affairs for five years. Although we held different positions, Bona and I remained very close, both socially and officially.

During the Interim Period of the CPA, Bona was Advisor to President Omer Hassan al Bashir and became a leading member of his electoral team in the 2010 Presidential elections. He also maintained a very close personal relationship with President Salva Kiir Mayardit of South Sudan.

After leaving the government, I held research positions in a number of think tanks in the United States. I also served as UN Secretary-General 's Representative for Internally Displaced Persons for 12 years and for 5 years as Secretary-General's Special Advisor on the Prevention of Genocide at the level of Under-Secretary-General. I left that post to be the First Permanent Representative of South Sudan to the United Nations at independence.

Although Bona and I maintained our personal relationship, we began to differ on some political issues, such as the SPLM/A New Sudan policy and John Garang's approach to the dialogue with the North, especially on self-determination. We nevertheless continued to discuss our differences cordially and with deep respect for our enduring friendship. Somewhat surprisingly, Bona did not share with me the manuscript for his book, *Abyei of the Ngok Dinka: Not Yet South Sudan*. He was honest enough to tell me that he wanted to avoid undue pressures to make compromises, which would almost certainly be the case if he received comments from manuscript readers. In retrospect, I appreciate his decision as I would have advised him against many things he wrote about key members of Ngok Dinka leadership, which would have defeated his objective.

Characteristic of Bona, he has been very candid with me about his conflict with the Ngok Dinka leaders in the SPLM/A on whom he focused his book. Two of these are my brothers and one is my cousin. His bitterness against them has negatively affected his position on the Ngok Dinka problem between Sudan and South Sudan.

The fact that he is very close to both Presidents Salva Kiir Mayardit and Omer Hassan El Bashir makes his attitude toward the Ngok Dinka crisis crucial.

His animosity against Ngok Dinka leaders is seen as having a detrimental effect on the cause of Abyei which is in sharp contrast to the leadership role the people of Abyei expect him to play in the interest of their area. Over the years, I have endeavored to mediate between Bona Malual and my relatives in Ngok leadership, both to restore the close relations that had always existed between our respective families and communities and to unify our efforts in promoting the cause of our people. Bona Malual's father, Madut Ring, and our father, Deng Majok, were leaders of their respective tribes and very close partners and friends.

Bona Malual himself became close to our father. He has often spoken very lavishly to me about his great admiration for my father and the very skillful way he managed the affairs of his challenging border area of Abyei. In his book, Bona recalls an incident which he also recounted at the reconciliation talks in considerable details. When he was in parliament in 1968, he interceded with the central government in support of our father. According to him, Ali Baldo, the infamous hardline Governor of Equatoria who had politically terrorized Southern Sudanese and had been transferred to Kordofan Province, dismissed my father as Paramount Chief. Bona was a powerful leader of the Southern Front, then a partner in the government.

Bona's account begins with Ali Baldo's infamous anti-South background in Equatoria which, according to him, added to his motivation to defend Chief Deng Majok against him:

When I became a member of parliament for the first time in 1968, an opportunity to serve my uncle Chief Deng Majok Kuol Arop presented itself. Governor Ali Baldo, the most notorious of Northern Sudanese administrators to set foot in Southern Sudan, had been transferred from Juba – where he had been for a long time a very cruel Governor of Equatoria – to El Obeid as governor of Kordofan, his native province. (p.151)

The account then turns to Ali Baldo's targeting of Deng Majok as a continuation of his campaign against the Chiefs in Equatoria.

In Kordofan, as governor, Ali Baldo missed Southerners to lynch or marginalize. The only one he could find was Chief Deng Majok Kuol Arop, who had by this time become a towering influence in the tribal administration of Kordofan Province as a whole, of which his Ngok Dinka of Abyei had been part since 1905...One of his first decisions was to dismiss Chief Deng Majok Kuol Arop as Chief of the Ngok Dinka. (p.152)

Bona then provides details of what actually happened. "Chief Deng Majok travelled by commercial lorry, with seventeen of his people, from Abyei to Khartoum, in the middle of the rainy season in July or August 1968" (p.153). Chief Deng Majok had a son, Ahmed Arob Deng, in Khartoum, whom he

helped to be elected as a member of parliament, even though he had a domestic conflict with him, which accounts for his going to Bona. But a more likely reason was that he saw Bona as a potentially more effective advocate for him than his son. As Bona recalled.

Uncle Deng Majok arrived in front of my small rented house in Khartoum North, as my guests. After taking my wife and young children to the house of a relative so that I could host Uncle Deng Majok Kuol Arop and his men at my home, I went to a cattle ranch in Khartoum and bought a bull and many provisions with which to feed them. Late in the evening, after the people accompanying the Chief had retired to rest, I sat down with him to hear what was happening. In his usual distinguished and dignified way, he related to me the humiliation him and therefore inflicted on him by Governor Ali Baldo. (ibid)

Bona was in a very influential position not only as a member of Parliament, but particularly as the Secretary General of a political party in government and a kingmaker who had been pivotal in the appointment of two members of his party as cabinet ministers while he wielded power as the party leader. As he put it,

This was a time of good luck and good fortune for both me and Uncle Deng Majok.... If Uncle Deng Majok came to ask me to assist him, and I had not been able to, it would have been a humiliation for me and an embarrassment for him. But at this point my power base was such that I had not the slightest concern that I might not succeed in helping him (p. 153-4).

Bona asked his uncle to go to bed and rest for the night. He would pick him up in the morning "to take him and fix the problem" (p.153-54).

The following morning, Bona picked up Chief Deng Majok and they went to the Minister of Interior, Hassan Awadalla. "Uncle Deng Majok and I were let into the office of the minister of the interior, and I could sense in my uncle a feeling of pride and the restoration of his dignity even before we saw the minister." Bona introduced the Chief to the minister and explained the objective of their visit. "I did not want any investigation into why Ali Baldo had dismissed the chief. I just wanted the minister to eat his words about my uncle, as some vengeance for all Ali Baldo had inflicted on South Sudan when he was Governor of Equatoria province" (p.155).

The scene of the exchange in the office comes across quite vividly.

While Chief Deng Majok listened silently, I told minister Hassan Awadalla that this chief was my uncle; that he could not be dismissed by a governor while I was a member of that government. I wanted him to be reinstated immediately and to be treated as if nothing had happened. The minister could

say no more. He saw the seriousness of the situation and the implication of what I had said (ibid).

The outcome was even more dramatic than the process.

Hassan Awadalla immediately placed a call to Governor Ali Baldo in El Obeid, and without even listening to the reasons that led him to dismiss the chief, the minister simply told Governor Baldo to 'take hands off Chief Deng Majok'. The minister then told the governor that Chief Deng Majok Kuol Arop had now been reinstated to his position as the chief of of the Ngok Dinka of Abyei. The minister also said that he was sending the chief back to El Obeid the next day on the police plane. When he landed in El Obeid, he would collect his letter of reinstatement from the governor and then the plane would return the chief to his home (p.157).

Bona Malual concluded his account with these moving words:

It is impossible to describe the atmosphere; and how Chief Deng Majok felt about what was happening to him.; regaining his glory in this way. Most importantly, the Chief felt that his personal authority could not have been enhanced in a more appropriate manner: leaving his home and community on a commercial lorry in the rainy season, as a dismissed and disgraced person, and then returning back home in glory as a reinstated chief on a plane provided him by the national authority (ibid).

When Bona first told me what had happened, I was very surprised as I had never heard of Father having ever been dismissed as Chief. Nor could anybody in our family or tribe recall any incident of Deng Majok's dismissal. It is however revealing that Bona told the minister to correct the situation swiftly as though nothing ever happened. Deng Majok probably did not want his dismissal to be known by his people and therefore kept it as a secret to himself.

I was myself well aware of the conflict between Ali Baldo and Father. When I was in England, Father wrote to me in late 1963 or early 1964, the only time he ever wrote to any of his children to the best of my knowledge, informing me of his conflict with Ali Baldo, the Governor of Kordofan. Father was in Khartoum to plead his case against the Governor. I later learned that Ali Baldo, who, as Bona notes with emphasis, was reputed to be politically hostile to Southerners, said to Father in a hostile exchange, "If you want to go back to your people in the South, go." Father complained to the central government about what he argued was a 'racist' remark by the governor and asserted that he was 'a Kordofani', whatever the governor might say against his belonging to the North. Reverting to the administration of the South was of course what the Ngok Dinka yearned for, although Father himself saw his strategic position as a bridge between North and South as mutually advantageous to both sides and of course to his people. Father also knew that Ali Baldo was only bluffing

and he shrewdly asserted his belonging to the North as a weapon against the governor. Obviously, that appealed to the central government authorities. Ali Baldo was reportedly reprimanded and forced into early retirement. And yet, Father felt that Ali Baldo's treatment of him reaffirmed his identity as a Southern Sudanese. In an astonishing coincidence, Bona reports in his book what is almost identical to what my father wrote in his letter to me: "He said that he now knew who his true people were" (p.158); my father wrote to me, "I now know who my real people are".

As the date of Father's letter and Bona's account were apparently in conflict, I wrote to Suliman Ali Baldo, the son of the Governor, a well-known scholar and human rights activist, to verify his father's time as Governor in Kordofan. In an email message dated November 25, 2018, Suliman responded:

I have double checked the exact date of my father, Ali Baldo, as Governor of Kordofan with my younger brother Alfadil Ali Baldo. Ali Baldo was transferred from Equatoria to Kordofan in early 1962 and retired from government service in June 1964. He then founded The Western Sudan Bakeries Company which he directed until his passing on 13 February 1969.

Ali Baldo was replaced in 1964 by Suleiman Wagie Allah who served until 1966. He was in turn replaced by Mohamed Abbas El Faghiri who served until Nimeiri seized power in 1969 and dissolved the parliament in which Bona was a member. El Faghiri thought very highly of Chief Deng Majok. In an interview in 1980 for the biography of my father, *The Man Called Deng Majok: A Biography of Power, Polygyny and Change*, El Faghiri had this to say:

I came to know the late Deng Majok in 1966 when I was transferred from Upper Nile to Kordofan as Provincial Commissioner (governor). I had already heard of the pacifying role he had played following the Arab-Dinka conflict, which had resulted from the rumors following the Sunday incidents in Khartoum during the October government in 1964.

As a person, Nazir Deng was kind to his people; he had a great sense of humor, patience, and imagination. He was always compromising, but for the better. As a leader, he enjoyed a strong personality, was just, fair, and firm. He could get what he wanted by diplomacy and tact. If he had had education, I am sure he would have emerged as a high-ranking African leader (p.138).

Later in the interview El Faghiri went on to say:

I knew many of the tribal chiefs of the South. With some exceptions, they tended to be instrumental, waiting to carry out instructions, rather than being suggestive. Deng Majok was a man of ideas. He was so paramount that you could hardly apply to him the North-South distinction of measurement.

Chief Deng Majok could compete favorably, both in performance as a chief and in his strength of character and dignity, with the best chief in Kordofan or anywhere elsewhere in the Sudan. In his clean white jibba and turban, he looked like a pyramid” (pp 270-71).

Obviously, El Faghiri could not have dismissed Chief Deng Majok.

When I brought the discrepancy of the dates and personalities to Bona’s attention, he reaffirmed that it was indeed Ali Baldo that Father had complained about. This raises the question of whether Ali Baldo had taken a decision which the Kordofan establishment, which had become antagonistic to Deng Majok, was trying to reactivate and implement, or Ali Baldo himself remained influential behind the scenes despite his retirement. Although that issue remains a mystery, Father himself corroborated what Bona had done for him, for which he remained profoundly grateful. In the last days of his terminal illness in Khartoum in 1969, Bona was together with us in close contact with Father. As he writes in his book,

It was sad that when I next met Uncle Deng Majok it was when he returned to Khartoum two years later, in 1970, [actually it was in August 1969], owing to health reasons. He never recovered from his illness and died a few weeks later. When he was ill, I visited Uncle Deng Majok at least twice every day, and we always had delightful chats, often about the political relationship between the South and the North (p.157-58).

One day, as we were leaving the hospital after visiting Father together, Bona left the room before me as Father and I continued discussing some matters. Suddenly, Father spoke very warmly about Bona, describing him as “a man” without giving any elaboration and advised us to maintain close relationship and collaboration with him. And, indeed, Bona and I developed a lifelong friendship and have worked very closely ever since, a relationship that developed out of our own volition, but also ordained by Father.

Knowing this positive attitude of Father toward Bona, my efforts in reconciling him with my relatives was not only a matter of personal interest to me as a friend and the interest of our Ngok Dinka community as a whole, but also a fulfillment of a sacred duty dictated by Father’s dying will. In any case, it was untenable that Bona and I should remain close friends while he had a feud with leading members of my family that was damaging the cause of our people. After preparing the ground with both sides, I came from the United States and Bona from the United Kingdom to meet in Juba, and after juggling with everyone’s competing agendas, we eventually held the meeting on February 27, 2017. Bona’s half-brother, Wundit Madut Ring, the Chief of their Twich Kuac Dinka section (tragically assassinated recently), and many from both sides, participated. The talks proved far more successful than anyone had expected.

Bona was characteristically candid in expressing his grievances. His adversaries were equally frank and forceful in their rebuttal, more in the form of explanation than apologies or confrontation. Senior national South Sudanese personalities who were invited to the talks also contributed very positively in bridging the differences. Despite areas of genuine differences in their respective political positions, the talks clarified that there were no personal animosities between the parties and that there was indeed much that still united them. In the end, declarations of genuine reconciliation were made, the parties embraced, and a sacrificial lamb was slaughtered, with appropriate prayers and rituals, in accordance with Dinka traditions of reconciliation. It was indeed a momentous event that opened a new page not only in Bona's relations with the family, but indeed between our respective Twich and Ngok Dinka communities.

The following day, another meeting was held with a selection of representatives on both sides to address the way forward in dealing with the Abyei crisis. That meeting also confirmed the commitment of both sides to the reconciliation reached the day before. Since then, Bona Malual and the concerned individuals from our side have continued to demonstrate unwavering commitment to the reconciliation agreement. It is in this backdrop that Bona Malual's book confronted me with a serious dilemma. On the one hand, I found the book so critical of the three individuals concerned and the Ngok Dinka leaders in general that I worried about the effect it might have on the reconciliation, if these individuals were to read it. On the other hand, the book was published and there was no way to prevent access to it, nor would I have wanted to conceal that fact from my family and the Ngok Dinka Community. I had to find a way of averting a potential crisis and bridging the differences.

Constructive Dialogue with Bona Malual

After pondering over how to deal with the situation, I decided to respond in a positive spirit. First and foremost, the book states almost exactly what Bona had said in the talks, albeit in more details and with greater emphasis. Second, the targeted individuals could respond to the allegations in the book in much the same way they had responded to Bona in the talks. I expected Bona to accept their response to the book in a spirit of constructive engagement, as he had indeed responded to their explanations in the talks. Third, I could try to play a bridging role between Bona and my relatives by providing a review of the book that would set a positive tone and create a framework for constructive dialogue. It is in this spirit that I give my own response to those allegations in the book on which I feel qualified to respond and invite the others to respond to those allegations that concern them and on which they are better qualified to

respond. What follows are the responses I hope will contribute to a constructive dialogue with Bona Malual. It is my sincere hope that this written exchange of views will avoid returning to acrimonious allegations or rebuttals and be used as an opportunity to correct obvious errors, clarify ambiguities, refute unwarranted or unfounded allegations, and, all in all, remove any lingering grudges and sources of disharmony. If these contentious allegations remain uncorrected, they could be persistent thorns in the flesh of our people's body politic. My goal is to consolidate the precious reconciliation that we achieved after years of debilitating discord.

Bona states at the very beginning of his book,

My own life and that of my family have been close to the family of Ngok Dinka people. At one time, before the traditional leadership of the Ngok decided to lead their community to Kordofan in Northern Sudan, my own section, known as Kuac Madut Ring - after my father became the first chief of Kuac Anganya, refused to join the Ngok to become part of Northern Sudan (p.ix).

Throughout the book, Bona documents the close relationship between our father Deng Majok, the Paramount Chief of the Ngok Dinka, and his father Madut Ring, Chief of the Twich section of Kuac. From early days, Bona himself grew close to our father. What Bona does not say, although he alludes to it from time to time, is that his section, together with other sections of the Twich Dinka tribe in Bahr el Ghazal Province, and Ruweng in Upper Nile Province, were also annexed to Kordofan Province in 1905, for administrative and security reasons, under the overall leadership of our grandfather, Chief Kuol Arob. These other tribes were subsequently returned to their respective administrations in the South, while the Ngok Dinka remained in Kordofan.

The oral history of the Ngok Dinka maintains that the return of the Twich and Ruweng happened before our father, Deng Majok, assumed the leadership and that it would not have happened had Father been in charge. Throughout Father's life, his ambition was to restore the unity of the Ngok and the Kuac. That is presumably what Bona meant when he said that his father's tribe of Kuac refused to join the Ngok Dinka in Kordofan. In fact, I remember Bona telling me that the issue was raised to him by my father, and that he, Bona, responded that since he was advocating self-determination for the South, with the prospects of independence from the North, he could not support his people, the Kuac, rejoining the Ngok in the North.

Bona alternates in various parts of his book on the method by which annexation to the North was made, at times asserting that the Ngok Dinka requested to be annexed to the North and at times presenting it as an arbitrary imposition characteristic of colonial rule. He writes,

Colonialism never consulted the local population, nor cared about the effects of its decisions on them... So, when the British in Sudan decided in 1905 to annex the small Ngok Dinka territory of Abyei, so that it would be administered as part of Southern Kordofan, they did not consider how this decision would affect the life of the local community (p.20).

This ambiguity in Bona's account remains unresolved in the book, although documented evidence establishes beyond any doubt that it was an executive decision for ease of administration and to better protect these Dinka tribes from Arab raids for slaves.

Bona asserts that the Ngok Dinka, along with fighters from the marginalized areas of Northern Sudan "such as Abyei, the Nuba Mountains and the Angosina (sic) of Southern Blue Nile" had been attracted by the SPLM/A vision of a United Sudan. He writes: "I became a target for these groups for daring to continue to advocate self-determination for the South despite the leadership of the 'Revolution' deciding that the country had to remain one Sudan" (p. x). Bona goes on to say, "The Dinka Ngok leaders of the SPLA took matters much further when it came to Colonel Garang's opponents. It became clear that even violent acts like lynching one of his opponents would endear them to him. I became a target, not only for political and social assassination, but also for physical elimination" (p.x).

Although I have difficulty believing Bona's allegation, I will leave it for the implicated Ngok Dinka leaders to respond to the allegation that they targeted Bona for character assassination and even physical elimination. As for the people of Abyei fighting for the unity of the Sudan, it should be recalled that the Ngok Dinka fought in the first war in the Southern Sudan Liberation Movement and its army that was known as Anya-Nya, whose declared objective was the independence of Southern Sudan with which they fully identified their people. As for the assertion that the Ngok Dinka as a people supported the unity vision of the SPLM/A, it is well known that South Sudanese generally accepted that vision not because they genuinely preferred to remain united with the North, but because they understood it as a shrewd strategy of the leader, Dr. John Garang de Mabior, to neutralize opposition to Southern Sudanese secession and gain alliance with the marginalized regions of the North.

The people of Abyei, though generally committed to secession, supported Garang's strategy. It is well known that when the SPLA soldiers were asked what they thought about Garang's unity vision for the country, their response in Dinka was "Ke tharku angicku", which translates as "We know what we are fighting for," a coded language for secession. In a round table discussion which I attended in Washington DC with the visiting delegation of the SPLM, Dr. John Garang was asked about the objectives of the struggle. When he re-

stated the commitment of the Movement to unity in a New Sudan, Deng Alor surprised everyone by openly disagreeing with Garang. "That is the position of the Chairman, not that of the South," he said. Someone later asked me, "How could Deng Alor contradict his leader in such an open meeting?" And I know for a fact that although I personally shared Garang's vision of a New United Sudan, hardly any Ngok Dinka I know, including my close relatives, supported the unity agenda.

This is in sharp contrast with Bona's perception: "What was surprising and has not been explained is why the leaders of the SPLA from Abyei were so hostile to the call of the South for self-determination when they said they had joined the SPLA to fight to be part of South Sudan" (p.74). Ironically, although Bona correctly argues that the Ngok desire to join the South was because of the mistreatment they received from the North and cites his father's argument that the Ngok had no future in the North, he seems to make an opposite case: "If the South accepted that it should remain part of Northern Sudan, to form one Sudan, old or new, there did not seem to be any sense in wanting Abyei to break away from Kordofan to join Bahr el Ghazal if these SPLA leaders were happy with Northern Sudanese subjugation of the South" (p.74). Why would the Ngok Dinka have joined the struggle of the South if they were happy with the North subjugating the South? And why would the people of Abyei accept to remain in a unity in which they themselves would remain under Northern Sudanese subjugation?

One of Bona Malual's persistent themes in the book is the perceived dominance of the Ngok Dinka in the leadership of the SPLM/A in South Sudan's public life, which he sees as responsible for the hard line Khartoum has adopted on Abyei: "When Juba packs its Government with politicians from Abyei – who then command the army of South Sudan, the SPLA, with generals from Abyei – Khartoum only perceives war with the South over Abyei, and not peace," (p. xi) he writes. Elsewhere, he observes that

the SPLM has compounded the mistake by making its members from Abyei the principal rulers of South Sudan and giving commanders of the SPLA [from Abyei] leadership of the army of South Sudan. This army has already attempted to take over Abyei by force of arms ... At the time of writing, the SPLA has been expelled from Abyei three times (p.11).

Bona goes on to say,

These costly actions included three or four times attempting to take over the small territory of Abyei by force of arms. Lieutenant General Pieng Deng Kuol, one of the five top commanders of the SPLA, failed on each occasion ... To do it twice, or three or four times simply tells you that the sons of Deng Majok Kuol Arob, who now find themselves with a free political hand

in South Sudan, are a very dangerous group of people. even to their own community of Abyei (p.96).

Although Bona Malual makes the assertion of SPLA attacks on Abyei repeatedly in the book, to the best of my knowledge, invasion has always come from the North, and the much weaker force of the SPLA has only been forced to react in self-defense. One incident in which the Ngok admit a degree of responsibility is when one SPLA soldier shot and killed a soldier of the Sudan army, whom he deemed as having encroached into the area with aggressive intention in violation of the terms of engagement. The response of the Sudan government was a full-scale invasion, devastation, and occupation of Abyei. Members of the Missiriya have described to me the scene of destruction and looting by their people that they themselves witnessed to their moral outrage. Another possible factor that might have contributed to Khartoum's aggression was the alleged presence in the area of SPLA soldiers in civilian clothes, including Southerners, to protect the vulnerable civilian population. Otherwise, for the Ngok Dinka to take offensive actions against Sudan's army would be simply suicidal, which has never been the SPLA strategy or tactic.

In an equally perplexing assertion, Bona Malual states, "Many South Sudanese already resent the fact that the Ngok leaders are also the rulers of South Sudan" (p.11). In sharp contradiction to the Abyei Protocol, which stipulates that the citizens of Abyei will have the dual citizenship of Sudan and South Sudan during the interim period, Bona states categorically that "as far as South Sudan is concerned, Abyei will remain part of Northern Sudan until the people of Abyei have voted" (p.13).

In a statement that reflects what the Ngok Dinka generally believe to be the reason for the recent massive removal of the Ngok from the leadership of both the Army and the government of South Sudan, Bona Malual goes on to say,

A solution to the problem of the Ngok Dinka of Abyei will only come about if the political life of South Sudan is freed from the influence of the leaders from Abyei, and when the foreign friends of South Sudan are no longer misled into believing that Abyei is a disputed territory between Northern Sudan and South Sudan (p.xi).

Again, I do not feel qualified to assess the position of the Ngok Dinka in the political and military leadership of South Sudan, nor the impact of that position on the policy of Sudan on Abyei. Bona's assessment of that role, however, sounds clearly overstated and appears to underrate the control of South Sudan's leadership over its own government. On the other hand, that control appears to be now manifested in the marginalization of the Ngok Dinka in the government of South Sudan. Many believe that Bona Malual has a hand

in this. And, indeed, Bona does not hide his satisfaction with this development. He writes,

At the time of writing, Lieutenant General Pieng has been removed from his post. It would appear that some political upheaval has afflicted the Deng Majok Kuol Arop family within the SPLM political establishment as a result of their dubious role in the attempted coup in Juba on 15 December, 2015, which attempted to overthrow the elected government (p.97).

Elsewhere in the book, after describing Abyei as “This extremely small territory,” a recurrent reference to the area in his book, Bona states that the area “is neither part of Northern Sudan – since 9 July 2011 a separate country from South Sudan – nor part of South Sudan” (p.1). This is a step in the right direction, since Bona maintains throughout the book, as is indeed implied in the sub-title, that Abyei remains as part of the North until the referendum on Abyei is conducted (p. 13). Put more positively, Abyei Protocol stipulates that until the referendum is held, Abyei remains under the shared sovereignty of Sudan and South Sudan, and accordingly, the inhabitants of Abyei enjoy dual citizenship. Bona Malual indeed has a chapter in his book titled “Shared Responsibility between Juba and Khartoum.”

Bona is however correct that Abyei Area is currently in a status of virtual statelessness, with no well-defined institutions of a functioning government, no social services, and no development programs. Only the government of South Sudan is now supporting whatever semblance of government presence exists in the area. This is why the citizens of Abyei feel that these meager services and their representation in the institutions of South Sudan make them already South Sudanese for practical purposes, whatever their status under international law. It should also challenge the Sudan to consider the legitimacy of their claim over the area and its inhabitants to whom they have shown no legal or moral responsibility. As noted above, Bona Malual repeatedly refers to Abyei Area as a small territory. He attributes the unity of the Ngok Dinka under one leadership to the small size of the area. He writes,

Unfortunately, because the Ngok Dinka community was so small (with one chiefdom alone) the ethnic leadership of the Ngok Dinka was dominated by just one family, the Arop Biong family. In the period we are studying the protagonists were Chief Arop Biong, his son, Kuol Arop Biong, and his son, Deng Majok Kuol Arop Biong; his sons in turn have taken over the chieftainship (p. 21).

What Bona does not realize, or chooses to ignore, is that scholars have written about the Ngok Dinka as the Nilotic group closest to the Shilluk Kingdom in their unity under one leadership. Despite the lingering rivalry between the two leading lineages, Dhiendior and Pajok clans, each of which claims original

leadership, the Ngok Dinka mythology traces their unity under one divine leadership back to the 'Byre of Creation'. Their unity under one leadership is not a function of their small size, as Bona contends, but the result of positive political developments, perhaps due to external influences in their border location. Pioneering writers about the area refer to Chief Arob Biong as Sultan and Mek, Arabic for King. Building on this history, which is known throughout South Sudan, one of the Dinka Chiefs I interviewed for my books, 'Dinka Cosmology' and 'Africans of Two Worlds: The Dinka in Afro-Arab Sudan', said to me that if Chief Deng Majok had joined the South, "He would have been our King." Needless to say, this was a metaphoric exaggeration, but one based on the preeminence of Ngok leadership in Dinka history as gatekeepers for Dinka territory. Bona himself made a comment about my father which I included in my book, *The Dinka of the Sudan*: "Deng Majok achieved absolute equality with Arab Chiefs and was accepted by the Central government as such. For a Southerner, that is a miracle" (p.146).

Bona struggles remarkably with a number of conflicting positions that are all valid from different perspectives. He states categorically, "The Ngok Dinka of Abyei are as close to me as it is possible to be" (p. 6). He then makes the ambiguous statement that "Geographically, if not culturally, the Ngok people of Abyei had been Northern Sudanese long before Sudan became independent" (p. 8). This of course raises the question whether the Ngok Dinka and their territory are separable or go together. If the Ngok area is deemed geographically part of the North, that would justify Northern Sudanese claim that the land is theirs, and should the people of Abyei choose to be Southerners, then they must physically go South and leave the land behind. I am sure that is not what Bona intended.

Bona acknowledges that before the Ngok Dinka were annexed to the North, they were not only part of Bahr el Ghazal, but were virtually one people with his own Kuac Dinka. He writes,

Ngok Kuol Arop and Kuac Madut Ring were a close cultural community ... It was assumed that the two sections were one: they always had a close affinity, acting together on any issue of mutual concern. Clearly, Arop Biong had the final say; that is until the question arose during British rule of joining the administration of Kordofan ... Arop Biong assumed that Kuac Anyanga, or Kuac Madut Ring, would follow his decision to be part of Northern Sudan (p. 17).

As already noted, Kuac was among the Dinka groups that were annexed to the North, but were later returned to the South, leaving the Ngok alone in the North.

Bona is correct in stating that “No one wants to draw borders on the basis of ethnicity and race. There is no country in the world that is one race or one ethnic group” (p. 8). He indeed argues that

It is the mistreatment of the Ngok people by their neighbors, the Missiriya Baggara Arabs, and the political upheaval between Northern Sudan and South Sudan that demands political resolution, since the assumption is that the majority of the Ngok Dinka want to revert to South Sudan. For reasons stated in this book, if they remain in Northern Sudan their future is precarious (p. 8).

Bona goes on to say, “My father often told me that he could not see a future for the Ngok people in Northern Sudan” (p. 18).

Bona Malual's Political Complaints

As already stated, Bona's conflict with Ngok leaders focuses on three individuals: Deng Alor, a close cousin to me, and Pieng Deng and Luka Biong Deng, both my brothers from the same father. Although I cannot speak adequately in defense of these relatives, whom Bona sees as not only having wronged him, but also harming the cause of their own people knowing them well, as I do, I have a hard time believing that they have done what Bona alleges them to have done. And yet, Bona being a longtime friend, a national leader, and an elder, I cannot dismiss his grievances lightly. This is why I felt strongly that I should encourage the two opposing sides to meet and frankly discuss their differences, confident that they would eventually come to an understanding and reconcile, as they indeed did.

Bona Malual's main argument, which is recurrent in the book, can be summed up in these words:

The government in Juba ... is clearly being held hostage by the handful of Ngok Dinka leaders of the SPLM, who seem to think and behave as if without them there would have been no South Sudan. This group, which is dominated by a small handful of the late Chief Deng Majok Kuol Arop's children, behave with incredible arrogance, and continue to believe that they can coerce South Sudan to liberate Abyei by force of arms, since for them it is obvious that the SPLM leadership follows their dictates (p. 58).

It is hard to believe that the people I know could be that arrogant or indeed politically naive. But assuming that they are, it is also difficult to see how the leadership of the SPLM/A could be so incapable of preventing such behavior. On the other hand, Bona's indictment is not restricted to the Ngok leaders, but extends to the whole SPLM/A leadership: “The SPLM leadership of South Sudan, generally and not just leaders of Abyei alone, has made it clear that they

think they know everything, and that matters can only be resolved their way” (p. 59).

Bona then links the two leaderships of the SPLM and Abyei in his blame: “Look at the role of the leaders of Abyei. Deng Alor Kuol, the leader of the Ngok group in the SPLM, was for a long time the darling of the late Colonel John Garang de Mabior and is also popular with the current leader of South Sudan, Salva Kiir Mayardit” (p. 59). Referring to the split within the party leading to the violent conflict that erupted on 15 December, 2013, which still rages on, Bona alleges that Deng Alor “is the leader of the rebel group within the SPLM leadership, the group that tried to overthrow the elected President Salva Kiir Mayardit of South Sudan by force of arms and failed” (p. 39).

Bona Malual is alluding to the conflict of 2013 which is widely alleged as an attempted coup perpetrated by Dr. Riek Machar and his allies, an allegation which the alleged perpetrators deny and the international community disputes. Eleven politicians were detained on the allegation that they were part of Riek Machar’s plot. Although visiting them was severely restricted, following a meeting of Ambassadors convened to brief them on the developments, I told President Salva Kiir Mayardit that since the detainees were not being heard, there was no way of knowing for sure whether or not they were supporting Riek. I said that if I were allowed, I would like to meet the detainees and ascertain their position.

The President commented that he did not think they were with Riek Machar. With his permission, I was able to visit the detainees in Juba, where some of them were still detained, and Nairobi, to which some of them had been moved. These individuals, who later became a political group known as the Former Detainees (FDs), denied involvement in the alleged coup and in fact disapproved of Riek’s use of force, although they shared the rebels’ call for reform. I sent President Kiir Mayardit reports on my meetings with them, which I included as a chapter in my book, *Bound by Conflict: The Dilemmas of the Two Sudans* (Fordham University Press, 2015).

Bona Malual’s complaints against select Ngok leaders are both political and personal, the two closely interconnected, with a focus on the unresolved conflict over Abyei. And although he sometimes comes across as evenhandedly also critical of Khartoum, his case is for the most part against the Ngok leaders and in favor of the Sudan government. This statement is illustrative:

The Abyei situation requires much more prudent leadership than is being provided by Deng Alor Kuol, Luka Biong Deng Majok Kuol, or retired General Pieng Deng Majok Kuol. Their attitude has made resolution of Abyei case rather difficult. Is it war that they want to pursue? Or is it the implementation of the referendum provided by the CPA? And can Khartoum

be kept out of any resolution of the Abyei problem and still arrive at a credible solution? (p. 59).

The United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA), established by the United Nations in June 2011, following the invasion of the area by the armed forces of the Sudan in May, 2011, is presented by Bona Malual as brought into the area by Deng Alor. As he put it,

Abyei is currently an occupied territory, along with Twich Mayardit Dinka community south of Abyei, the occupier being an Ethiopian contingent of the United Nations Peacekeeping Force. The Ethiopians have become a UN occupation force, issuing their own orders to the local population and committing violent acts with impunity. This foreign force, imposed by Deng Alor Kuol when he was South Sudan's minister for foreign affairs, has made life intolerable for the local population, Ngok and others (p. 60-61).

Quite apart from the fact that Deng Alor or any foreign minister has no power to deploy a UN peacekeeping force, UNISFA, as I have often said in my official statements to the UN Security Council in my capacity as the Permanent Representative of South Sudan to the United Nations, is the best thing that has happened to the Ngok Dinka of Abyei in recent years. Since the wars with the North intensified in the 1960s, Abyei, as Bona himself notes in the book, has been exposed to repeated attacks and brutalities from the North with the perpetrators enjoying absolute impunity. And while the protection by UNISFA is not without shortcomings, it has provided the area with a level of security that the population has never enjoyed under the governments of independent Sudan.

It is indeed ironic that Bona Malual presents the wanton attack by the Missiriya in 1965, in which hundreds, perhaps thousands, of innocent civilians lost their lives, as provoked by the Ngok Dinka. He writes, "The Ngok first attempted to demarcate their border with the Missiriya Baggara by force in 1965. The Arabs unleashed their fighters and evicted the Dinka from the border, massacring hundreds, if not thousands, of innocent members of the Ngok Dinka community, their bodies being left to rot in the desert" (p. 67).

As I recall, what provoked the fight was that the Missiriya had attacked the Rek Dinka, killed and dismembered people, and used the arms of one victim for beating the drums. The Ngok Dinka were enraged by this horrendous defilement of a fellow Dinka and retaliated. Although the Dinka used only spears in the fight, both sides suffered heavy casualties. The Missiriya reacted by killing in cold blood hundreds of Dinka in Babanusa who had been sheltered in a railway station, allegedly for their own protection and in the presence of the police and Arab chiefs. In the subsequent peace conference moderated by Northern Sudanese tribal leaders known as ajaweed, chaired by Chief Moniem

Mansour of the Hamr tribe, the Missiriya were found to be in the wrong and openly reprimanded.

Bona Malual writes that among those killed in that fight “were a number of university students, such as the bright Majak (Mijak) Abiem Bagat and his colleagues” (p. 67). Those were not killed in the 1965 fight, but in one of two ambushes in 1977 committed by the Missiriya against lorries carrying the Ngok Dinka traveling from the North to Abyei. Ironically, Mijak was going to the area to conduct field research for a doctoral dissertation on the history of Dinka-Arab relations for London University under the supervision of Professor Richard Gray. Professor Gray later wrote me a very moving letter of condolence and with high praise for Mijak Abiem as one of the brightest students they had ever had.

As Minister of State for Foreign Affairs with influence on government policy, I had just tried to persuade Mijak to accept the position of Chief Administrator in the area to combine with his field work. He was supposedly reflecting on my offer when he decided to proceed to the area unbeknownst to me. First Vice President General Mohamed el Baghir and I went to Abyei and Muglad to calm down the situation. And I later assisted our colleague and mutual friend with Bona Malual, Abdel Rahman Abdalla, the Minister of Public Service who chaired the peace conference between the Ngok Dinka and the Missiriya Arabs, with the help of ajaweed, Northern tribal leaders as mediators.

Another assertion Bona Malual makes is that it was the Ngok Dinka who took the border dispute between them and the Missiriya to the International Court of Arbitration at The Hague, The Netherlands. Under what he calls “The Hague Gimmick”, he writes that among the mistakes of the SPLM leaders, was taking the case of Abyei to the International Court of Arbitration. “They knew this was not going to work; it was merely an attempt to embarrass Khartoum because Khartoum was already under pressure by the Western powers who wanted a regime change” (p. 105). In fact, it was Khartoum that proposed The Hague arbitration after having objected to the border demarcation by the Abyei Boundary Commission, ABC, whose determination was supposed to be ‘final and binding,’ but which Khartoum argued had exceeded its mandate. And although Khartoum initially accepted the ruling of the Court of Arbitration, which re-drew the ABC borders in their favor, Sudan later reneged on the implementation of the Hague’s determination.

Bona Malual’s Personal Grievances

Bona Malual’s personal case against the three Ngok leaders focuses on several allegations. With respect to Deng Alor and Pieng Deng, who served respectively

as Governor and SPLA commander in Bahr el Ghazal, he believes that because of his opposition to the SPLM/A, they were intent on physically eliminating him and that it was the protection by Salva Kiir Mayardit that saved him. He writes,

At some point Colonel Garang was irritated by some of my views that contradicted his public position, and he may have hinted to the children of Deng Majok Kuol Arop that it would be desirable to get rid of me - if they did it their way and it was not traceable back to him ... Nevertheless, nothing came to pass, so I am still here, writing about these events (p. 115-116).

Later in the book, Bona Malual was even more explicit about the plans of the Ngok leaders to eliminate him and that it was Salva Kiir who prevented them from doing so.

There is the universal belief that if one's day to die has not arrived one will survive – and this is perhaps what has allowed perceived 'detractors' like myself to have lived on. Efforts to liquidate people were repeatedly planned and attempted. Yet our survival is also due to friends such, as in my case, Salva Kiir Mayardit, who did all they could to protect us (p. 148).

Bona goes on to say,

It is the overwhelming belief in the liberation policies of the SPLM, especially the pursuit of the 'New Sudan' policy that led to the extreme hate for me by the three young leaders of the Deng Majok Kuol Arop's family members of the SPLM – Deng Alor Kuol, Pieng Deng Majok Kuol Arop, and Luka Biong Deng Majok Kuol Arob. These three had arrogated to themselves the right to put me down (p.148).

It is hard to believe that these individuals, whom I know so well, could have contemplated assassinating someone who is a leading member of their community. What is particularly shocking is that two of these individuals, Deng Alor and Pieng Deng, who played a crucial role in defusing the 2004 conflict between John Garang and Salva Kiir that would have destroyed the Movement, are presented in a contrastingly negative light by Bona Malual, when he writes, "At the height of the political differences between Colonel Garang and his number two, Commander Kiir Mayardit, it was, again, the children of Chief Deng Majok Kuol Arop in the SPLA who caused havoc by fanning those differences" (p. 121). I know that Deng and Pieng courageously shuttled between the parties in an extremely explosive situation to convene the Rumbek meeting of the SPLM leadership that eventually ended the brinksmanship.

Another allegation I have difficulty believing is that in the aftermath of the brutal 1991 internal rebellion by Riek Machar and Lam Akol, in which members of our own family were gruesomely murdered, "Deng Alor Kuol and the other clique of Deng Majok Kuol Arop's children" as "part of their maligning and

tarnishing (my) image ... kept on telling any South Sudanese who did not know any facts of the rebellion that (I) had been part of that horrendous rebellion.” (p.128). Bona and I were then in a meeting of ‘Concerned South Sudanese’ in Adare, Ireland, to discuss the political situation in the country. We even sent a message condemning the rebellion and standing in solidarity with the Movement under the leadership of John Garang. Never did I ever hear any rumors alleging Bona’s involvement in the rebellion. Such rumors would have been easily dismissed as absurd. There are other specific and unbelievable allegations about Deng Alor to which I cannot respond. For instance, Bona Malual asserts that Deng Alor publicly declared that “a policy that had been announced by President Omer Hassan Ahmed el Bashir, the President of the Republic ... was not Government policy” (p. 91). Deng Alor was then minister of foreign affairs. In that capacity, Bona alleges that “Deng Alor Kuol urged his president to surrender to the International Criminal Court (ICC), which had indicted him” (p. 94). According to Bona, when he spoke to the media in defense of the President, he later learned that “Deng Alor had agreed with Luis Moreno Ocampo, the ICC prosecutor, to threaten me with indictment.” (p. 95).

The case against General Pieng Deng, apart from the alleged plot to assassinate Bona Malual, is that he rigged the 2010 elections against Bona by ordering his army to control the voting stations and ensure that the votes be cast in favor of the SPLM candidate.

General Pieng then ordered his army to take over the forty-plus polling stations in my constituency. ‘No election official should be allowed into any of these polling stations’. The SPLA soldiers were to read out the electoral roll call, name by name, and hand out the voting tokens to other soldiers, which they would then post into the polling box of the SPLM official candidate. In this way the SPLA soldiers would ensure that only the SPLM candidate was elected, and that this terrible big black snake was defeated (p. 135).

According to Bona, Salva Kiir Mayardit told the population that while the SPLM had their official candidate, people should vote their conscience, which Bona interpreted as support for him. When SPLA soldiers supporting him threatened to fight General Pieng’s soldiers, Bona said that he withdrew his candidacy to avoid bloodshed (p.135-136). Bona Malual’s grievance against Luka Biong is that he insulted him as having sold Abyei to the North. Bona had negotiated with the leading Northern Sudanese political party, Umma Party, to support self-determination for the South within the 1956 borders, which excluded Abyei. When Bona announced this to a South Sudanese audience moderated by Deng Alor, Luka was given the floor even though, according to Bona, he had not asked for it. He allegedly said,

You, Bona Malual, I have documented evidence to prove that you have sold away Abyei to Northern Sudan. Al Sadig al Mahdi has bought Abyei from you for the North. Al Sadig al Mahdi has promised you that you will be the first prime minister of Sudan from the South, if you let Abyei become part of the Missiria Baggara Arab land (p. 130).

As minister in the office of the President, Luka Biong is also accused of misuse of power. In Bona's unbelievably harsh words,

This young political zealot may have read the colonial saying 'Divide and rule' and might have seen himself as a new colonial ruler. However, there is a saying in Juba that is quoted by many South Sudanese, that the Ngok people of Abyei say they are in Juba to run the country for the South because they are better educated (p. 98).

It is said that

If Luka Biong Deng Kuol did not like you or did not like your group, you had no right in South Sudan as an individual or as a group. The outcome of this policy was that entire sections of South Sudanese society were excluded from participation, no matter what their role had been in the liberation struggle of South Sudan (p. 88).

Can even a head of state, let alone a minister, wield such awesome power?

Luka is reported to have said that "the Ngok have succeeded in marginalizing the Twich community from the political power in South Sudan, and that 'the Twich are finished.'" (p.102). How could such a seasoned scholar, social scientist, and political realist be so naively arrogant? Or was this a fabricated rumor, calculatedly passed on to Bona to fan communal animosity, as I suspect it was?

Bona Malual's Commitment to the Cause of Abyei

Although Bona Malual is very critical of today's Ngok leadership in the SPLM/A, he apparently remains unwavering in his support for the cause of the people of Abyei, which he believes these leaders have compromised or undermined. In this regard, he applauds the constructive role played by the Ngok leaders of the past who realized that Abyei, being a border area, had to maintain cooperative relations with all its neighbors. Bona is particularly complimentary of the late Chief Deng Majok Kuol; Deng Majok's father, Chief Kuol Arob; and Kuol's father, Chief Arob Biong, the first to establish relations with the Missiriya Arabs and the central government in Khartoum.

As Bona Malual put it,

Long before colonialism had decided to annex South Sudan to the Northern Sudan, to form what became the colonial state of Sudan, the leading family

of Arop Biong concluded that it was in the best interests of their people, the Ngok Dinka of Abyei, to be administered as part of Kordofan (p. 5).

Chief Arob Biong's son, Chief Kuol Arob, and grandson, Chief Deng Majok, consolidated the relationship with the neighboring Missiriya Arab tribe in Kordofan.

Chief Deng Majok Kuol Arop, in particular, became a towering leader in his own right. His word was tantamount to law amongst his people, and no one could disobey his orders with impunity. This helped to keep the peace with all his neighbors, not just the Missiria Arabs but also the Twich Dinka, South of Abyei (p. 28).

Bona Malual makes an observation which many British administrators have made; the Ngok Dinka were far more law abiding than the Missiriya and became the peacemakers on the North-South border:

The Baggara Arabs were well known for being an unruly community by nature. If disputes arose over grazing areas or water, they did not agree to settle the issue at a Dinka court that they were not part of. Arop Biong had in mind that these communities had no legal, political and even administrative recourse, and there was little government to speak of (p. 36).

Bona writes,

Being in one province, under one district administration and one native administrative court, the Baggara Arabs recognized that they were one people with the Ngok Dinka of Abyei. This did not mean that enduring problems were automatically resolved. Many still remained, but since these problems came to one and the same court and the Chiefs who had to handle them recognized that they belonged together, the problems were manageable (p. 36).

The fact is that the Ngok Dinka and the Missiriya never shared a common court. The Ngok Dinka were the only community in Northern Sudan who, by a special order of the Governor General, were administered by the Chiefs' Courts' Ordinance that applied in the South and which administered customary law. The Missiriya, like the rest of the tribal communities in the North, were administered by the Native Courts' Ordinance, which applied a mixture of native law with an indigenized version of Islamic law. Appeals from Abyei court went straight to the central court and were never seen by another native court of appeal.

Bona is therefore not correct when he writes, "Deng Majok Kuol Arop interchanged the native Court presidency with the Missiriya Arab Chiefs, of the like of Babo." (p. 60). What the Ngok Dinka shared with the Missiriya was the Rural Council, of which Deng Majok was once elected President to

replace Babo Nimir, the Paramount Chief of the Missiriya. He is, however, correct when he writes, "Even when he was not the president of the Missiriya Baggara Arabs and the Ngok Dinka joint native Court of Abyei, the Arabs had to comply with his instructions when they moved South with their cattle to graze and water along the River Kiir" (p. 60). It is indeed popularly known that Babo used to instruct his people that once in Ngok Dinka territory, their Chief was Deng Majok. For that purpose, an Arab sat in the Dinka court to advise on issues relating to Missiriya customary law, though not as a regular member of the court.

Bona is also quite correct when he writes,

Even those problems that arose between the neighboring Dinka communities south of Abyei – in Bahr el Ghazal and Upper Nile – with the Baggara Arabs were controllable, because of the Ngok Dinka chief of Abyei, whether this was Deng Majok Kuol Arop or his father Kuol Arop Biong. It was easy for any of the Ngok chiefs to set up court to resolve disputes between the Baggara Arabs and any of the Dinka sections, even those South of Abyei (p. 36).

Bona Malual sees the way forward in the credible implementation of the Abyei Protocol of the CPA, with the cooperation of the governments of the Sudan and South Sudan, to allow the Ngok Dinka to freely decide whether to remain in the Sudan or join South Sudan, and to assure for the Missiriya their seasonal access to grazing lands and water in Dinka territory. As stipulated in the Abyei Protocol, the right to vote in the self-determination referendum must be restricted to the members of the nine chiefdoms of the Ngok Dinka and other permanent residents of the area.

Bona Malual argues that since the government in Khartoum is a signatory to the Abyei Protocol, the CPA, and has recognized the independence of South Sudan in accordance with the agreement, it should also accept the implementation of the Abyei Protocol: "There is every reason to believe that the regime will also respect the implementation of the Abyei referendum if it is conducted freely and fairly with its cooperation and participation" (p. vi). Bona Malual concludes with these personal reflections on his attitude to the problem of Abyei:

In spite of all the abuse and insults that continue to be heaped on me, even after I have declared publicly that I have stepped aside from South Sudanese politics to do other things such as writing, I am still very concerned about the plight of the Ngok Dinka people of Abyei. I continue to pray for a workable solution to their predicament. The fact that Khartoum and Juba have ceased to communicate effectively makes the quest for that solution very difficult, but it is the only way out and a solution must be found (p. 172).

Concluding Comments on Bona Malual's Book

I have tried in the foregoing review of Bona Malual's book to engage in a constructive dialogue with him. First, I acknowledge his unwavering commitment to the cause of the Ngok Dinka, poised as they are between the Sudan and South Sudan. Second, it is obvious that Bona feels deeply hurt by what he sees as a hostile attitude toward him from several leaders of the Ngok Dinka in the SPLM/A, all of whom happen to be from the ruling family of Arob Biong and his descendants. Third, Bona sees the role of these individuals in the context of their influential position in the SPLM/A, the dominant party in the government of South Sudan, to which he appears uncompromisingly opposed. These standpoints and perspectives negatively impact on Bona's attitude toward the Ngok Dinka of Abyei, which results in an ambivalent approach to their cause. Given his close personal relations with the Presidents of both Sudan and South Sudan, Bona's ambivalence is widely believed to have had a damaging effect on the cause of the Ngok Dinka, which he otherwise supports.

I share Bona's view that no solution to the Abyei problem is possible without the cooperation of the two governments. On the other hand, such cooperation is not possible if it is not seen to be in the mutual interest of both governments. The interest of South Sudan is obviously to let the people of Abyei determine their destiny, trusting that they will decide on joining South Sudan. The real question therefore is what the interest of the Sudan in Abyei is and how it can be met to ensure a mutually agreeable solution.

Obviously, the interest of the Missiriya is to be assured access to dry season grazing land and sources of water. This is already provided for in the Abyei Protocol, but needs to be reaffirmed. This is however not the vital interest of Khartoum. The real interest of Khartoum remains a hidden agenda, which must be explored and revealed if it is to be effectively negotiated to meet the mutual interests of the concerned parties.

So, while the personal aspect of Bona's differences with Ngok leadership is important, it is the link with his role in influencing the positions of the leadership of the two countries on Abyei that made reversing the hostility between them into collaborative unity necessary, and indeed imperative.

It was for this reason that I endeavored for years to mediate between Bona Malual and his adversaries among the Ngok leaders. My aim was to turn their adversarial relationship to one of renewed solidarity and cooperation in addressing the plight of their people in the beleaguered area of Abyei. My efforts eventually bore fruits. A frank and constructive dialogue ended in impressive achievement of reconciliation and a unified sense of purpose.

Bona's book came out at precisely the time when this reconciliation was underway and eventually achieved. As one of the first to receive a copy of the book, which I quickly perused, I was deeply concerned that the adversity reflected in the book against the leading Ngok Dinka members of the SPLM/A could undermine the remarkable achievement we had just made. I was keen that we avoid a negative reaction to the book in order to avert this potential damage. Not responding to the book could not be an option. But I felt that a constructive response was possible. I also thought that I should perhaps set the tone for such response: hence this review. I hope my effort to that end has been successful, at least to an appreciable degree.

I hope that with a constructive framework of dialogue, it will be possible for the individuals whom Bona targets in the book to also respond in much the same way they did in the reconciliation talks which resulted in understanding and genuine unity behind our shared objectives. Whatever their response to Bona's book, and Bona's response to their response, I hope that we will avoid undoing the impressive achievement we made in restoring our unity, collective sense of purpose, and solidarity in pursuing our common goals in the interest of our people and our country.

Chapter Eight:

Abyei Dialogue: Bottom Up and Top Down

Francis Mading Deng

The Concept

The National Dialogue which President Salva Kiir Mayardit first announced in December, 2016, and which continues to be a subject of on-going debate, should be seen as creating a conceptual framework for a multi-faceted process of preventing and managing differences that could generate conflicts of varying magnitude. In that sense, dialogue should be viewed as a pervasive feature of human interaction and relations. While this process can be more formalized in aggravated specific situations, it is in fact an aspect of everyday life, which I have underscored in two publications, a book entitled *Talking It Out: Stories in Negotiating Human Relations*, and an article that has received considerable attention, 'What Is Not Said Is What Divides'. It is in this context that I share a recent experience in a personal and inter-communal dialogue of the Ngok Dinka pertaining to Abyei, which has implications nationally within South Sudan and internationally in the relations between Sudan and South Sudan.

The Problem

For years now, I have been very much concerned about a conflict between my good friend and colleague, Bona Malual, and several members of Abyei Ngok Dinka leadership in both the Sudan People's Liberation Movement and Army, SPLM/A, and the government of South Sudan, all of whom happen to be my close relatives. As is well known, Bona Malual is not only a prominent figure in South Sudan and Sudan, but is also well connected to the leadership in both countries. He is a leading member of the Twich Dinka, which neighbors the Ngok Dinka of Abyei, and is also a leader of Greater Bahr el Ghazal.

What was a personal conflict between him and individual Ngok Dinka leaders incrementally evolved into an inter-communal conflict between significant elements of the Ngok and the Twich, indeed affecting relations between the two communities in the region. Given Bona Malual's connection to the leadership of both Sudan and South Sudan, this otherwise personal and inter-communal conflict was having adverse effects on the political cause of the Ngok Dinka at the national level in both countries.

The Context

The cause of the Ngok Dinka concerns the status of their area, Abyei, between Sudan and South Sudan. The Ngok Dinka and the neighboring Twich and Ruweng Dinka were annexed to the then Kordofan Province in Northern Sudan in 1905 by the British colonial administration for administrative convenience and to enhance their protection against slave raiders from the North. The Twich and the Ruweng were later returned to their original southern provinces of Bahr el Ghazal and Upper Nile respectively, while the Ngok remained in Kordofan. The British subsequently gave the Ngok Dinka the option to join the South, but their leaders opted to remain in the North for a variety of reasons, foremost among which was to safeguard their land from predictable Arab occupational claims to the land, should the Ngok Dinka join the South.

It should be recalled that even before colonial intervention, the Ngok Dinka had established close ties with the neighboring nomadic Missiriya Arab tribes to the North who enter the area seasonally with their herds in search of water and pastures. Their respective leaders had indeed concluded friendship pacts that reinforced cordial and cooperative relations between their respective peoples. Being members of the same administration reinforced ties of good neighborliness. Joining the South would have made the Missiriya feel insecure about their seasonal access to sources of water and grazing lands and turned them from appreciative guests to invaders and possible usurpers of the land.

The British colonial rulers and their evenhanded policies and administrative practices reinforced the cordial relations between the Ngok Dinka and the Missiriya Arabs. Independence and the dominance of the Arab North tilted the balance in favor of the Missiriya against the Ngok Dinka. The Ngok Dinka increasingly began to identify themselves with their southern kith and kin rather than with the Northerners. Abyei became part and parcel of southern political consciousness and eventual rebellion against the Arab Islamic domination of the North. The youth of the area, most of whom had been educated in the South, joined the South in the two liberation wars, the first from 1955 to 1972 under the leadership of Southern Sudan Liberation Movement and its military wing, the Anya-Nya, which ended in the Addis Ababa Agreement of 1972, and the second from 1983 to 2005, championed by the Sudan People's Liberation Movement and its Army, SPLM/A, which was ended by the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, CPA, in 2005.

The Issues

The 1972 Addis Ababa Agreement that ended the first war granted the South regional autonomy and gave Abyei the right to decide through a plebiscite whether to remain in the North or join the South. President Jaafar Mohamed Nimeiri, who made the Addis Ababa Agreement possible, refused to implement the provision on Abyei. Following my appointment as Ambassador shortly after the Addis Ababa Agreement, I became convinced that Nimeiri would not implement the provision on Abyei and that the South was no longer prepared to go to war with the North over Abyei. I therefore proposed an alternative approach that sought to turn Abyei from a contested area to a model of peace and unity. The alternative would grant the Ngok Dinka 'mini autonomy' to be self-governing and provided with services and socio-economic development. The people of the area would then see their position at the border as beneficial and play a bridging role between the North and the South, offering a peaceful meeting ground and a model for national unity and integration.

I first shared the proposal with Bona Malual in the United States. We had just been appointed in Nimeiri's government, he as Minister of Information and Culture and I as Ambassador to the Nordic Countries of Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden. Bona agreed that under the circumstances, that was the best thing to do. I then presented the proposal to President Nimeiri and key members of his government, including Abel Alier, President of the regional government of South Sudan, Dr. Mansour Khalid, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, and Dr. Jaafar Mohamed Ali Bakheit, the Minister of Local Government. The proposal was enthusiastically endorsed by the government

both at the center and in the southern region. I secured funding from USAID and invited the Harvard Institute for International Development, HIID, to assist with its implementation. After I was transferred to Washington as Ambassador and later appointed Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, I continued to monitor and promote the implementation of the project. We secured the transfer of Ngok Dinka government officials from both the center and the south to go to Abyei and serve in the administration, police, education, agriculture, and other civil service positions in the area.

The project however proved quite controversial. Many among the educated Ngok Dinka saw it as compromising the cause of the people of Abyei in favor of joining the South. In fact, when Nimeiri first went to Abyei, accompanied by Bona Malual, to introduce the project to the people, although he was popularly very well received, he was confronted with such a hostile demand for joining the South that he decided not to announce the project and chose not to deliver the benefits he had taken to start its implementation. Indeed, he was about to leave Abyei abruptly when Bona intervened to persuade him to calm down and honor the hospitality that had been prepared for them. Unfortunately, I was just opening the embassy in Stockholm and was not able to join the delegation or prepare the ground by explaining the thinking behind the proposal that generated the Project. Bona had arranged for an advance team to go to Abyei to prepare for the president's visit, but they had not seen my proposal and did not fully understand the objective of the visit. It would take a considerable amount of time to regain Nimeiri's support and put the project back on course. Persuaded by Dr. Mansour Khalid and myself, Nimeiri later delivered a statement at the Unity Day celebration in Kadugli, which included a passage I had prepared which strongly endorsed the project. In the statement, he added a reference to Abyei as a meeting ground for what he called 'the great Dinka and Missiriya tribes' and pledged to oversee the implementation of the Project himself. Abyei would therefore be autonomously administered under the Presidency.

The project however remained controversial and was particularly opposed by the Missiriya and the authorities of Kordofan. The Missiriya saw it as favoring the Ngok Dinka and a ploy to make Abyei incrementally join the South. The authorities of Kordofan saw it as an imposition by the center without the approval of the provincial government. So, the relative success in the implementation of the project, which the central government strongly supported and even formed a ministerial committee for its implementation, was persistently undermined by the Kordofan authorities who continued their repressive practices in Abyei.

The unresolved situation in Abyei and the resulting agitation of the politicized youth of the area eventually resulted in a local rebellion that triggered

the return to North-South violence, escalating into a full-scale war in 1983. The Abyei Protocol of the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement, CPA, that granted the South the right of self-determination, which was exercised in favor of independence on July 9, 2011, gave the Ngok Dinka the right to decide by a referendum whether to remain in the Sudan or join South Sudan. The Abyei referendum was obstructed by the Sudan, and numerous efforts to resolve the impasse were to no avail. It was indeed a case of history repeating itself.

Again, I came up with a proposal for the interim stabilization of Abyei under the international protection provided by the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei, UNISFA. The proposal aimed at ensuring security throughout the Ngok Dinka territory as determined by the Haig Arbitration of 2011, establishing an autonomous self-administration of the area, delivering essential services, generating socio-economic development, and promoting peaceful coexistence and reconciliation with the neighboring tribes, especially the Missiriya Arabs of the North. It was in many ways a repeat of our 1972 proposal on the development of Abyei as a model of peace, unity and integration in the country. I presented the proposal in two documents, a paper entitled 'Abyei as a Gulf or a Bridge' and 'Proposals for the Interim Stabilization of the Crisis Situation in Abyei Area', which I submitted to the Security Council on May 19, 2014, when I was the Permanent Representative of South Sudan to the United Nations.

The proposal was well received by the people of Abyei generally, but suspected and even openly opposed by elements of the political elite, some of whom saw it as a return to the old policies of unity, with the North associated with our father as the Paramount Chief and with our family generally. Others genuinely saw it as undermining the cause of joining South Sudan. Again, as was the case with my proposal in response to the stalled implementation of the provision on Abyei in the Addis Ababa accord, Bona agreed with my proposal, although he later adjusted his position in favor of prioritizing the implementation of the Abyei Protocol, fearing that Khartoum might use the interim stabilization of the area as a ground for not moving forward with Protocol implementation. Bona's support for the cause of Abyei was however impacted negatively by his conflict with individual leaders from the area. He even withdrew from any active engagement with the issue of Abyei, one of the reasons I persisted in my efforts to end the conflict with him.

The Conflict

Bona Malual's grievance with Ngok Dinka leaders in the SPLM/A focused on three individuals: Deng Alor, Pieng Deng and Luka Biong Deng. Deng Alor is

my cousin, while Pieng and Luka are my brothers from the same father. All three played a prominent role in the Southern Sudan liberation struggle and became leading members of the SPLM/A and the post-independence government of South Sudan. Bona Malual not only had personal grievances against them, but also accused them of having fostered a militant attitude toward the Sudan government within the government and army of South Sudan, which he said was adversely affecting the cause of their Ngok Dinka people.

Bona Malual is a close friend and ally of President Salva Kiir Mayardit and in addition to having been a Cabinet Minister in the government of President Nimeiri, was Advisor to President Omar Hassan el Bashir of the Sudan during the interim period leading to the independence of South Sudan. He has therefore been in a pivotal position to influence both leaders in their approach to the issue of Abyei. While President Kiir has been a staunch supporter of the cause of the Ngok Dinka, recent developments indicate a rift between him and key Ngok leaders in his government and the army. This led to the increasing marginalization of the Ngok Dinka in the government of South Sudan, in which Bona has been implicated as having played a role.

For both personal and political reasons, Bona's animosity with several key members of my family who are leaders of our people became untenable for me. Bona has been a very close friend and a partner in both personal and political matters. In addition to us both having served as ministers in Nimeiri's government, we cooperated over the years in promoting the cause of South Sudan at home and abroad and played a prominent role in the peace processes leading to both the Addis Ababa Agreement of 1972 and the 2005 CPA.

Bona's Antagonists

As noted earlier, the three individuals with whom Bona was in conflict were both close relatives and leaders of our community and held a striking commitment to the cause of both Abyei and South Sudan.

Deng Alor, after graduating from Cairo University, was recruited in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and was serving at the headquarters when he joined the struggle. For many years, he was Office Manager for the SPLM/A leader, Dr. John Garang de Mabior. He was later appointed the Governor of Bahr el Ghazal during the struggle. He then assumed the position of Minister of Regional Cooperation during the interim period, after which he became Minister of Cabinet Affairs and then Minister of Foreign Affairs in the government of National Unity. At the time of writing, he was the Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation. Deng Alor not only played a crucial role in promoting the cause of South Sudan in Africa and around the world, but was

also a key member of the SPLM negotiating team in all the talks that led to the CPA. As Minister of Foreign Affairs at the time of writing, he occupied a position allotted the Former Detainees (FDs) by the 2015 Peace Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan. Since some of the FDs were still active members of the opposition outside the country, this made him vulnerable to critics, including Bona Malual, who saw him as an ambivalent member of the opposition inside the government.

Pieng, after graduating from the prestigious Hantoub Secondary School at the top of his class, joined the Faculty of Engineering of the University of Khartoum where he also led his class. He was in his third year when he joined the struggle and soon rose to important commands. After independence, having risen to the rank of General, he became Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations in the SPLA and then Inspector General of Police, from which he was relieved three years later. Over the years, I have heard of Pieng's popularity within the SPLA, both during and long after the war and even after his release as Inspector General of Police. When I was Permanent Representative of South Sudan to the United Nations, I heard raving praise for Pieng's performance as Inspector General of Police from visitors to the country who did not know my relationship with him. His removal from that post was widely believed to be part of the trend to remove the Ngok Dinka from positions of responsibility in the government of South Sudan, which Bona Malual is alleged to have influenced and, judging from his book on Abyei, seemed to welcome.

Luka Biong graduated with a degree in Economics from the University of Khartoum, where he was first in his class. He was appointed to the Faculty of Economics of Gezira University and then sent abroad for post graduate studies. He was doing a Ph.D. in economics in Brussels, Belgium, when he decided to join the struggle. He later obtained his Ph.D. degree from the University of Sussex in the United Kingdom. Luka held a number of senior positions in the struggle and played a key role in the peace talks and constitution drafting for both the interim government of national unity and the government of South Sudan. He established the South Sudanese Center for Documentation and Statistics which became a major state institution in independent South Sudan. Luka held the position of Minister in the Office of the President of South Sudan and Minister for Cabinet Affairs of the Government of National Unity in Khartoum. After leaving the government, he was appointed Professor of Economics at Juba University, where he directed the Center for Peace and Development Studies and worked until he was abruptly compelled to leave the country by political intrigues, again believed to be part of the increasing marginalization of the Ngok Dinka in the institutions of the government of South Sudan.

Bona's Grievances

Bona's grievances against these three Ngok Dinka leaders focused on a number of allegations. He claimed that Deng Alor, as Governor of Bahr el Ghazal Province, and Pieng Deng, as SPLA Commander in the area, plotted to assassinate him on the expressed or tacit instructions of Dr. John Garang de Mabior, with whom Bona had serious political differences. He also alleged that Pieng rigged the 2010 elections in the Twich constituency, which he had always won, in favor of the SPLM candidate. Bona also alleged that Luka accused him of having sold the cause of the Ngok Dinka to the North for political favors, having been allegedly promised the position of the first South Sudanese Prime Minister of the Sudan, as long as he made sure that Abyei remained in the North.

It is ironic that although Bona Malual's conflict with these Ngok Dinka leaders impacted negatively on the relations between the Ngok and his people from the Kuac branch of the Twich Dinka, his father, Madut Ring, the Chief of Kuac, and our father, Deng Majok, Paramount Chief of the Ngok Dinka, were very close friends. Indeed, the Kuac and the Ngok are not only very close and were both annexed to the North until the Kuac were later returned to the South, but were considered initially one people. Father's ambition throughout his leadership as Paramount Chief was to restore the unity of the Ngok and the Kuac. Bona Malual himself was close to our father and in his last days, Father advised us to maintain close relations and cooperation with Bona Malual. So, trying to resolve the conflict between my friend Bona and my relatives was not only a matter of personal interest for me, but was also a fulfillment of what Father had ordained and therefore a sacred obligation.

The Initiative

For a number of years, I strove to fulfill this obligation and even convened a number of informal meetings toward that end. But, despite courteous response to my overtures, both sides brought considerable resistance to concluding a sustainable reconciliation. Eventually, I began to sense a more serious desire on both sides to end the feud. Although pride and the need for face-saving remained obstacles in the way forward, encouraging indications led to a tentative agreement on a fixed date for talks. Bona and I agreed to converge in Juba around the first week of January 2017. Talks would convene on January 27, 2017. Bona's brother, Wundit Madut, the Chief of their Twich tribe, came with numerous members of his community. The Ngok Dinka were also well

represented. And prominent South Sudanese personalities were invited to play a mediating role. Overall, attendance was impressive.

Both Bona and I kept President Salva Kiir Mayardit, First Vice President Taban Deng Gai, and other national figures informed about our plans and they were all very supportive. Everyone seemed to agree that Bona's conflict with Ngok leaders was not only harmful to the cause of Abyei, but was not in anybody's interest.

Just before the meeting convened, Bona gave me a copy of his latest book, *'Abyei of the Ngok Dinka: Not Yet South Sudan'*. I knew that he was writing a book on Abyei and that he did not want to share the manuscript with me because he did not want me to influence what he wanted to say. And, indeed, had he shared the manuscript with me, I would have advised against his publishing it as it was. The book had just come out of the press and the copy he shared with me was, according to him, the first, given to him at the airport as he was leaving for Juba. I could not find the time to read it before the meeting, but I browsed through it and found it extremely provocative. I did not want the targeted individuals to read it as that would certainly jeopardize the reconciliation talks about to commence. But I did not also want them to be in the dark about the contents of the book, as that would imply that I had connived with Bona and misled them into reconciling with a man whose book still reflected uncompromising enmity.

I chose to balance the conflicting considerations by giving our members the gist of what the book contained, including specific examples of Bona's allegations against them. That was the first conclusive evidence that our people had resolved to end the conflict, for while some of the allegations obviously offended them, they decided to transcend them in favor of reconciliation. I also knew that unless some unexpected developments dictated otherwise, Bona was intent on ending the conflict if his antagonists apologetically admitted that they had wronged him. While I suspected, indeed knew, that they would not go that far, I was confident that they would be constructive in their engagement with Bona. But, of course, nothing could be taken for granted on either side. After all, it was possible that they were only being courteous to me and that the talks might trigger a disruptive provocation on either side, in which case we would be even worse off than before the attempted reconciliation. But the risk was certainly worth taking.

The Talks

The meeting venue became a subject of some controversy. Bona favored holding it in my premises, which meant the hotel. But given the expected size of

the meeting, combined with the need for hospitality, that was not a convenient option. The house of General Pieng, which was spacious and more suitable, was also not an appropriate option since Pieng was a party to the conflict. The house of General Kuol Deng Abot, also known as Kuol bi Ting, though a cousin, was also spacious and suitable. When I told Bona about this option, he was not happy, since he identified Kuol with his adversaries, but since I had already made the arrangements, he was willing to go along. That venue proved very suitable. The physical arrangements were thoughtfully structured, with the leadership of the two sides and their affiliates seated in comfortable sofas and chairs facing one another, Bona and I were seated in a sofa in front of the gathering, and a large group of community members and spectators sat at the back between the two groups.

General Kuol Deim, another cousin, conducted the discussions with impressive efficiency. After Christian and Muslim prayers by a bishop and an Islamic functionary, I was called upon to make the opening statement. I began by giving the essential background to the meeting: my personal relationship with Bona, the close ties between our respective families and communities, the conflict between Bona and key members of our family and community, the adverse effect the conflict had not only on the relations between our respective communities but also on the cause of our area of Abyei, and my efforts to mediate a resolution of the conflict and to unify our struggle behind the cause of our area. I then called on Bona to state his case to which the concerned individuals from our side would then respond.

Characteristic of Bona, he presented his case very frankly and forcefully, reflecting in almost exact words the allegations he had made more extensively and forcefully in his book. He simply stated his case without any indication that he wanted to reconcile, except perhaps for the mere fact that he had accepted the reconciliation talks that were underway. He did however distinguish between his conflict with individual members and his commitment to the cause of the Ngok Dinka.

Deng Alor and Pieng responded with equal candor, not accepting or apologizing for the allegations, but giving detailed explanations that refuted the allegations and indicated that there was in fact no personal grudge against Bona. In some cases, some of the alleged behavior, such as Pieng's conduct in the 2010 elections, or Deng Alor's political stance with Dr. John Garang in his differences with Bona, were explained as reflecting adherence to the policy of the movement and not personal prejudice against Bona. Overall, the differences that existed were therefore political between conflicting parties and positions, and not personal animosity.

Luka Biong was not there to respond, but he was fully in the picture about the talks and had given his acceptance and blessing. He also sent his response to the anticipated and indeed well-known allegations by Bona against him in a message that was read by Justice Deng Biong, another cousin and file holder on the case of Abyei in the government of South Sudan. Luka's response was also an explanation, with the added tone of apology that it had not been his intention to offend Bona. In fact, he called Bona later and offered a more explicit apology for his allegation against Bona having sold the cause of Abyei to the North. He said that his angry utterance only reflected his disappointed expectation that Bona as a leader for our people should unambiguously support their cause for joining South Sudan. It was in no way intended as disrespect for Bona.

Bona's brother, Wundit, the Chief of his tribe, responded to explain the view point of his community, specifically their resentment of the negative campaign he said was waged against Bona as their leader. He also addressed the way the conflict was affecting relations between Ngok and Twich communities back home. His tone was somewhat antagonistic and generated a strong response from one of the mediators and even from Bona himself. But it also indicated the extent to which Bona's personal conflict with individual Ngok leaders had become a conflict between their respective communities.

After a seemingly exhaustive exchange of views, the talks adjourned for lunch and the atmosphere was already friendly enough for both sides to share the food. But Bona surprisingly refused, insisting that he would not eat because, as he put it, "We are not yet reconciled." People tried to persuade him, but he would not budge. I worried somewhat that perhaps the positive trend in the talks might be misleading, and that there was still more hidden persistence to the conflict than was apparent.

After lunch, a number of the attending national figures spoke in a way that reinforced the trend toward reconciliation and the need for unity behind the common cause of Abyei. The speeches were powerful and effective in bridging the differences and reconciling the parties. I felt relaxed and assured that our efforts were succeeding.

Bona gave the concluding remarks that sealed the deal. The conflict had ended; he was fully reconciled with his former antagonists. Enthusiastic applause followed. Bona embraced Deng Alor and Pieng Deng. Women ululated. The atmosphere was suddenly very jubilant. Traditional rituals of reconciliation were conducted. Dinka hymns were sung as we were escorted to stand around a lamb that was to be sacrificed. Traditional prayers were said by elders calling on God and the ancestors to bless the reconciliation. The assembled group chanted the traditional response to the prayers. At the end, we were sprayed

with consecrated water as the lamb was slaughtered. Blood sprayed onto the pants of my safari suit, which the elder who was conducting the prayers told me was a blessing and said that I should treasure the suit as sacred. We stepped over the lamb in accordance with tradition. All these rituals imply that the reconciliation was complete and binding and that anyone who would violate the oath of reconciliation risked a dangerous curse that could manifest itself in serious harm, amounting to illness and perhaps death.

United Approach

The following day, Bona and I met with his former adversaries and other Ngok Dinka elders to discuss a joint strategy for pursuing the cause of Abyei. The reconciliation the day before was reaffirmed and discussions of a joint approach continued in earnest. Although Bona had been in favor of my approach for the interim stabilization of the Abyei situation, he was now more inclined to support the position of the Ngok leaders which prioritized the implementation of the Abyei Protocol of the CPA and was less supportive of my stabilization proposal which, though urgently needed, he feared might weaken the pressure on Khartoum in favor of immediate implementation of the Protocol. Despite some persistent differences on emphasis, we all agreed that our respective positions are indeed complementary.

It was now quite clear that the parties were unwaveringly committed to the reconciliation agreement. People particularly appreciated the fact that Bona, the initially aggrieved party, consistently demonstrated his commitment to reconciliation in all that he said and did. We continued to hold strategy meetings with the core leaders of the Abyei community in which the new unity of purpose was consistently reaffirmed.

Perhaps the most significant point in the agreed approach, one with which Bona was particularly concerned and with which I also strongly concurred, is that no solution is possible on Abyei without the cooperation of the two governments. In fact, all the resolutions of the Security Council on Abyei call for such cooperation. The belief that a solution can be imposed on the Sudan by the African Union or the United Nations is wishful thinking, and a miscalculation. Of course, the international community can use various methods of persuasion, including positive and negative pressure, but in the end, the best method is to explore common ground in the mutual interest of the concerned parties toward a win-win solution.

In pursuit of that objective, it was agreed that Bona and I should proceed to Khartoum to engage the leadership on both the implementation of the Abyei Protocol and the urgent need for interim stabilization. After the visit

to Khartoum, we would then go to Abyei to brief the community on the reconciliation agreement and the result of our visit to Khartoum.

Throughout the process, we briefed President Salva Kiir and First Vice President Taban Deng on the result of the reconciliation talks and discussed with them our plans for the visit to Khartoum. They continued to be very supportive and offered ideas on what to discuss with the leadership in Khartoum.

The issue of Bona's book continued to be a matter of concern for me personally. As yet, I was the only person from our community who had the book. But the book was out and comments were being made in the social media, with those from the Ngok Dinka particularly angry. I still feared that negative reaction might impact on the important achievement we had made. In particular, I was concerned that the Ngok leaders might conclude that I had misled them into reconciling with someone whom I knew had written a very hostile book against them, one that could also harm the cause of our people. I decided to keep them informed about the contents of the book as I was reading it.

Remarkably, they all demonstrated a very sober and mature response to the book. They said that they would eventually respond to the book, but objectively and constructively, and not in a way that would endanger the reconciliation that had been achieved. I reported that to Bona and emphasized that I expected their response to be constructive and that I would myself write my own response that I hoped would set the tone and create the framework for such a constructive response from the others.

Bona's reaction was very positive and reassuring. He said he would encourage and welcome any response, even if it was not constructive. He however hoped that people would bear in mind that the book was written before the reconciliation and that they would consider that people had now reconciled as they respond. He particularly stressed that nothing anyone would say in response would change his position on reconciliation. I asked him whether he would be prepared to put that down in a couple of paragraphs that could be used as a preface to any responses that might be written and published. He said he would first wait for any responses that might be written and then write his response to the responses along the lines he had just shared with me.

Although I did not tell Bona at the time, I began writing my own response to the book as soon as I finished reading it. And whenever Bona came to see me in my hotel room, or where I was residing during our visit in Khartoum, he must have seen his book lying on the table and must have realized that I was probably writing a response, although we never spoke about that. Interestingly enough, when copies of his book arrived to him while we were still in Juba, Bona gave autographed copies to Deng Alor, Pieng Deng, and our cousin Kuol

Alor, the Chief Administrator in Abyei. He also gave copies to a number of eminent persons in Juba in my presence and I always remarked, "This is an explosive book; read it with caution." Bona always responded to my comment with laughter and sometimes quoted my response to others. On receiving the book from Bona and reading the title, Abel Alier, the highly respected leader and elder, asked whether I had read it, and before I responded both Bona and I laughed as we both realized that I would give my usual warning. I can only hope that my written response and any other responses that Abyei leaders might write will be appropriately received by Bona as part of an on-going dialogue that should not harm our unity, solidarity, and unified pursuit of the cause of our people.

One thing is unquestionable. Bona's commitment to the reconciliation and the cause of the Ngok Dinka remains unshakeable and was well reflected in our discussions with the leaders of the Sudan during our visit to Khartoum.

Mission to Khartoum

Although we informed the Sudanese Ambassador in Juba of our decision to visit Khartoum, we arranged our plans and appointments for meetings quite independently. The visit turned out to be quite challenging. Apart from a number of pleasant social events with old friends and colleagues, with the help of Bona's personal contacts, we met with President Omar el Bashir; First Vice President and Prime Minister, Bakri Hassan Saleh; Foreign Minister, Professor Ibrahim Ahmed Ghandour; and other government officials.

The meeting with President Bashir set the tone for the official position. Bona began by stating the purpose of our visit, associated with the need to implement all the remaining provisions of the CPA, with a special emphasis on the Abyei Protocol, to allow the Ngok Dinka to exercise the right granted them by the Agreement to decide whether to join South Sudan or remain in the Sudan. Meanwhile, there was also an urgent need to provide the area with essential services. My statement reinforced what Bona said with emphasis on the urgent need for interim stabilization of the area, including Khartoum's endorsement of an autonomous self-administration of the Ngok Dinka, the delivery of social services, the generation of development, and the promotion of reconciliation and cooperation between the Ngok Dinka and their Missiriya Arab neighbors.

Bashir's response was quite animated. He recounted the way he had supported the wishes of the people of South Sudan for independence against the public opinion in the North, how he had expected an independent South Sudan to be a friendly neighbor with which Sudan would have the closest ties,

but how he had been deeply disappointed by the hostile attitude of South Sudan toward the Sudan, how agreements reached on the withdrawal of troops from the borders had not been honored, that South Sudan was continuing to support Sudan's rebels, and that even the continued use of the name Sudan People's Liberation Movement and Army indicated a hostile attitude toward the Sudan. He said he was no longer inclined to cooperate with South Sudan, including on the issue of Abyei. In fact, it was clear that he was shifting toward confrontation, away from cooperation.

On Abyei, Bashir claimed that the Missiriya spend nine months a year in the area and were therefore entitled to vote in the referendum and participate fully in the interim administration of the area. He however stated that he was prepared to have Abyei be a state whose members would participate in all the organs of both Sudan and South Sudan, executive, legislative, and, by implication, judicial, and in the end, choose whether to be in the Sudan, in South Sudan, or retain their special status between the two countries.

I responded with equal fervor to explain that as we grew up we knew that there was Dar el Denka, Land of the Dinka, and Dar el Missiriya, Land of the Missiriya; that the Missiriya would come to Dinkaland during the dry season to water and graze their herds and sell their commodities, particularly their millet dukhun, which the Dinka craved over their grain mareig, a word the Missiriya used as a name for the Ngok Dinka; and the Missiriya would return to their area with the early rains to cultivate their millet. I also argued that the Missiriya and the Dinka each governed themselves and only shared arrangements for managing their bilateral relations. I added that during the period the Missiriya spent in Dinkaland, their Paramount Chief, Babo Nimir, used to tell them that once they entered Dinkaland, their Chief was Deng Majok. There was absolutely no justification for suggesting that the Arabs administer themselves without Dinka involvement and then share the administration of the Ngok Dinka. Each should be autonomous and then both can agree on institutions, committees or councils, to deal with matters of mutual interest or concern. I told him that I was however interested in his third option, which, if endorsed by the parties and credibly implemented, I would personally vote for in a referendum.

Although President Bashir punctuated his statements with smiles, jokes and laughter, it was obvious that he was a very angry man. Bona, who had shuttled between Bashir and Kiir over the issue of border withdrawal, told President Bashir that he understood and appreciated his anger, but that as a leader who bore responsibility for both countries, Bashir's decisions should not be based on anger. Bashir said that we would of course convey his concerns to President Kiir but hoped that a basis for cooperation on addressing the pending

issues, especially the Abyei problem, could be found and that we hoped to be back to continue the dialogue.

Although the tone and demeanor of First Vice President/Prime Minister Bakri Hassan Saleh was different, his message was essentially the same. In particular, he said that the time for people selecting what was good for them and disregarding what they thought not so good was over, that there would be no more room for selectivity. He however spoke warmly about our initiative and encouraged us to continue our efforts.

Foreign Minister Ghandour was much more cordial, perhaps diplomatic, in our discussion with him. He even appeared receptive to my plea for the interim stabilization of Abyei and welcomed my offer to prepare and send him a note on the proposal, which we agreed would be treated confidentially and not made public at this stage of the discussions.

All in all, although there were significant differences in our perspectives, the visit to Khartoum was a relative success. The fact that the visit was welcomed by the authorities in Khartoum with full knowledge of what it was about was itself positive. The door for dialogue was clearly open, and the discussion on issues also confirmed a willingness to engage in a dialogue. Indeed, we were encouraged by all those with whom we met to continue our initiative with expressions of confidence that we could deliver. What all that meant however was that Khartoum was now linking any progress on Abyei to developments on addressing the issues pending between Sudan and South Sudan.

As expected, the response of the leadership in Juba to our report on the visit indicated that there were indeed two sides to the story and that South Sudan too had complaints about Sudan's attitude, including support for its rebels. The situation was less clear on the alleged agreements on the withdrawal of troops from the borders that Bona had brokered and the extent to which those parties honored or violated those agreements.

Since the successful reconciliation talks, we kept the Ngok leadership in Juba fully informed of our activities. They too were very supportive of our moves. They even judged our visit to Khartoum a success as it broke the silence that had fallen on Abyei. Before the visit there had been a lull in the engagement between the two countries on Abyei, nor had there been any public debate on the issues involved. The visit had opened doors and initiated a discussion that should now be pursued and sustained.

Visit to Abyei

We then arranged with the United Nations Interim Force for Abyei, UNISFA, to visit the area. Initially, because of sensitivity about Khartoum's possible

objection, UNISFA was inclined to make it a personal visit by me to my home area. But on learning more about the background, they recognized it as an official mission and did all the necessary logistical and security arrangements. Traveling on UN flight to Wau, spending the night in the VIP quarters of the UN Mission in South Sudan, UNMISS, we proceeded the next day by UN helicopter to Abyei.

The reception in Abyei was overwhelming. I had of course visited Abyei on many occasions before, in both personal and official capacities, and had always been very well received. On one occasion, visiting in my official capacity as Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Internally Displaced Persons, IDPs, the USAID Assistant Administrator for Africa, Roger Winter, who accompanied me, described the reception as a 'coronation', while the UN pilot who had flown us to Abyei remarked that he had never seen so many happy people in one place as he witnessed then.

This last visit was however exceptional. The reception at landing, though controlled and limited by the UN security forces, was congested with officials of the local administration, traditional authorities, and community leaders. On landing, and at several spots the first day, bulls were slaughtered in sacrifice over which we jumped in the ritual way of welcoming and honoring distinguished visitors. Uncle Alor Jok, the only surviving son of our Grandfather, Chief Kuol Arob, said very moving prayers in the Dinka spiritual tradition. Over the two days of our visit, five bulls were sacrificed at various stopping points. Seven to eight UNISFA vehicles were always in the convoy that escorted us wherever we went.

The public rally we held the day of our arrival shortly after checking into our accommodation at the UNISFA compound appeared to have been attended by virtually the entire town, men, women and children. The governors of the neighboring Twich and Gogrial states, and their tribal chiefs and representative elders attended. In the traditional display which I had not witnessed for a long time, the age sets of the nine sections each entered the dance field booming with their war songs and performing a variety of dances, some of which were quite acrobatic. They would then move on to leave the scene for members of the next age set to enter the scene, booming with their own songs and dance. After all the nine sections had performed, speechmaking began.

The formalities began with a Christian prayer and the chanting of Koranic verses. After a welcoming statement by the Chief Administrator of Abyei and the Paramount Chief, I was called upon to speak. I made a brief statement giving the background to the reconciliation we had concluded and our visit to Khartoum, after which I called on Bona to give a more detailed account of the reconciliation and what we had done since then. I then resumed my speech to

elaborate on all that I had tried to do over the years for the cause of Abyei and my current proposal and efforts for the interim stabilization of the area. More speeches by the governors and the traditional leaders followed. This went on until nightfall when we returned to our accommodations at the VIP quarters of UNISFA.

The next day, our program began with a tour of the town and the surrounding areas. The scene was both impressive and depressing. Since my last visit, Abyei appeared to have been transformed by an impressive infrastructural planning, with wide streets lined with modern buildings, including a hospital, schools and other structures, all of which indicated significant progress in the development of the town. The depressing aspect was that most of these structures had been destroyed by the invasion of the Sudanese army and were left as empty shells.

We then stopped at the gravesite of my father, where several other leading members of the family are also buried. Another bull was sacrificed and Uncle Alor Jok sang ancient hymns and said traditional prayers, invoking all the known ancestors in our long line of Ngok Dinka leaders. We then went to the local government headquarters, where we met with a large gathering which the chiefs of the nine sections of the Ngok Dinka, each with ten representatives, the governors of the two neighboring states and their chiefs, and other local officials and community leaders attended. Apart from Christian and Muslim prayers, the meeting opened with popular war songs from each of the nine sections. Every one of the nine chiefs, with one additional representative from the section spoke. The visiting governors and their chiefs also spoke.

There was overwhelming appreciation of our initiative and a strong endorsement of my Stabilization Proposal, even by those who were known to consistently oppose any ideas emanating from anyone from our family.

The evening before our departure from Abyei, UNISFA Force Commander hosted a working dinner over which we discussed their mandate and operations of the mission, and conveyed the appreciation of the community for the work of the mission and some of the concerns that needed attention. It was a cordial end to what had been by all criteria a very successful visit.

Dialogue in Perspective

One of the issues most debated about the National Dialogue decreed by President Salva Kiir Mayardit is whether it is to be bottom-up or top-down. A remarkable feature of our initiative and the ensuing dialogue on Abyei is that it was both. Since the initial idea was to resolve the conflict between Bona Malual and individual Ngok leaders, the initiative was essentially microscopic. But as the individuals concerned represented the wider Ngok and Twitch Dinka

communities, the involved circles were inherently expansive. Since the ultimate objective was to unify the front in pursuit of the political cause of the Abyei Area, the process had to extend not only to the national level within South Sudan, but also bilaterally to the Sudan. As the issue of Abyei is part of the Abyei Protocol of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement that was internationally brokered and guaranteed, the implications of the process inevitably extended to the international level.

Obviously, we had no means of enforcing whatever was proposed and agreed by the parties. Our only mechanism of enforcement was the commitment of the individuals to the reconciliation and the cooperation of the higher authorities who are parties to the Abyei Protocol and the CPA, in particular the leaders of the two governments, Sudan and South Sudan.

This also implies that the dialogue involved is a continuing process. Apart from the objective of reaching an agreement, the implementation itself would require on-going dialogue and negotiation. Beyond that, continued interaction and relationships among the parties entail a process of negotiation and dialogue.

In that sense, what the president has initiated is a concept that requires forging a normative framework and culture of peaceful interaction and negotiation or dialogue. There is no problem that cannot be resolved through peaceful means. Indeed, the traditional approach to resolving conflicts is that a solution is there to be found through exhaustive search and discussion. This is why traditional African conflict resolution method involves lengthy time-consuming debates, unlike the Western approach where rights and wrongs are determined through fact finding and strict application of the laws or rules involved. The parties leave with one winning and the other losing. They go their separate ways, perhaps never to meet again.

The African approach is based on the assumption that the individuals in conflict are members of a community who must go back to live together in the community. This is why the resolution of a conflict ideally involves rituals of atonement and reconciliation in which spiritual powers are invoked to bless and guarantee the deal just concluded.

It is our hope that as the Abyei dialogue initially involved individuals and specific issues concerning one community that extended to other communities and eventually two countries, it might offer some insights that are relevant to the National Dialogue decreed by the President. Apart from the interconnected levels from the bottom up and the top down, there is the additional fact that dialogue need not resolve all the problems facing the country at once. Addressing problems one at a time may cumulatively reduce the crises and incrementally lessen the tensions in the interconnected contexts of the conflict.

Addressing the problems of Abyei can have a pacifying effect in the neighboring communities to the North and the South, specifically the Missiriya Arabs and the Twich Dinka. It could also lessen the tensions between Sudan and South Sudan and perhaps improve the prospects for cooperation. That is at least our optimistic view about the implication of what we tried to do in the Abyei Dialogue.

Part Four:

The Search for Solutions

Chapter Nine:

The Abyei Arbitration

Luka B. Deng Kuol

Introduction

Since the end of the Cold War, civil wars have become pronounced and endemic to many African countries. Africa has the highest incidents of intense civil wars in comparison to other regions. This trend has been increasing in the last decade, while it has fallen or remained static in other regions except the Middle East. As a microcosm of the African continent, post-independent Sudan has been plagued with atrocious internal violent conflicts, and it has become increasingly known as a country that does not honor any peace agreements but always opts instead to fight with itself through a violent internal war (Alier, 1990).

Since the declaration of independence from Anglo-Condominium rule in 1956, "violent conflict" rather than "peace" has been a normal phenomenon in the Sudan. The Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) signed in 2005 by the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) and the Government of Sudan (GoS) offered an unprecedented opportunity to make "peace" not only a reality but also a normal phenomenon in Sudanese society. The CPA provides a framework for reforming Sudan within generally accepted principles of good governance and respect for the rule of law. It also put Sudan at a critical juncture, and its implementation would not only have benefited the Sudanese,

but would also have had ripple effects throughout the region. Unfortunately, the CPA did not produce two peaceful states, but instead it produced two states bound by conflicts (Deng and Deng, 2015).

Despite the in-built detailed mechanisms for ensuring its full implementation, the CPA was not fully implemented – particularly the protocols related to conflicts in Abyei, Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile. The mechanisms provided in the CPA for ensuring the full implementation of Abyei Protocol failed to find an amicable solution of the dispute over the final and binding report of the Abyei Boundaries Commission (ABC) and subsequently the conduct of Abyei Referendum (Deng, 2005).

The main objective of this chapter is to provide an account of the arbitration process genesis and the final award of the Abyei International Arbitration Tribunal. The chapter is divided into six sections including this introduction. Section 2 summarizes the provisions of the Abyei Conflict Resolution Protocol, the causes of the dispute over the implementation of the Abyei Protocol, arbitration agreement and arbitration process. Section 3 analyses the decision of the Abyei Arbitration Tribunal in the context of the submissions of the parties to the Abyei Arbitration Agreement. Section 4 then summarizes the reaction to the decision of the Abyei Arbitration Tribunal and the status of its implementation, followed by Section 5 which discusses the post-Abyei Award conditions in the area. General conclusions are presented in the final section.

The Abyei dispute and arbitration process

Abyei sits on the border between Sudan and the current independent state of South Sudan and has experienced great upheaval in the successive North-South civil wars that have ravaged the country since independence in 1956. The root causes of Abyei conflict go back to the early 1900s, when in 1905 the people of Ngok Dinka were transferred from Bahr el Ghazal to Kordofan province by British colonial authorities for both administrative reasons and to protect them from slave raids waged against them by the Missiriya Arabs. During the first civil war that erupted in Southern Sudan in 1955, the people of the Abyei area joined the southern resistance movement known as “Anyanya”, which later became known as Southern Sudan Liberation Movement (SSLM), with the aim of returning the administration of Abyei to Southern Sudan.

The Addis Ababa Agreement, concluded in 1972 and ending 17 years of civil war, had temporarily resolved the southern problem and provided for the people of Abyei the option to choose in a plebiscite whether to join the administration of Southern Sudan or remain in the North. But the efforts

after the Addis Ababa Agreement of initiating a development programme and special administration for the people of Abyei in the North met resistance, especially by the authorities in Kordofan and elements in the central government in Khartoum, and ultimately failed (Cole and Huntington, 1997). The Addis Ababa Agreement was later dishonored and the plebiscite for the people of Abyei was not conducted. The abrogation of the Addis Ababa Agreement together with other factors, including the frustration of the people of Abyei, resulted in the eruption of the second civil war that started in the Abyei Area in 1982 (Deng, 2002).

The CPA that ended the 22-year civil war between the GoS and the SPLM included a special protocol (the Abyei Protocol) for the resolution of the conflict in the Abyei area. Importantly, the Abyei Protocol allows the people of Abyei to cast a separate ballot, simultaneously with the referendum for Southern Sudan, to determine whether Abyei will retain its special administrative status in the North or join the administration in Southern Sudan. The Protocol provides a special administrative status for Abyei to be under the Presidency of the Republic as well as granting residents of Abyei dual citizenship in both northern and Southern Sudan.

The Abyei Protocol set forth the definition of the Abyei area and a set of procedures for demarcating its boundaries. In particular, the Protocol defines the territory of Abyei as the area of the Ngok Dinka chiefdoms transferred to Kordofan in 1905 while ensuring that the Missiriya Arab nomads and other nomadic peoples retained their traditional rights to graze cattle and move across the territory of Abyei. The Abyei Protocol provides for the establishment of the Abyei Boundaries Commission (ABC), composed of distinguished experts from Africa and elsewhere with a range of complementary expertise in Sudanese history, geography and other relevant disciplines. The ABC's mandate was "to define and demarcate the Area of the nine Ngok Dinka Chiefdoms transferred to Kordofan in 1905." The composition of the ABC and the procedural guidelines by which they were to define and demarcate the border were provided for in the Abyei Protocol and its Annex.

The ABC members were specified to include representatives from various interested factions: one from both the National Congress Party (NCP) – the ruling political party – and the SPLM, two each from the two administrations of the SPLM and GoS in the Abyei Area, two each from the Ngok Dinka and the Missiriya, and five impartial international experts selected by the governments of the United States of America, United Kingdom and the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD). In the selection of these five international experts, no complaint was raised by either party to the CPA. In addition to field consultations and presentations by the two parties, this group of experts was

to consult the British archives and “other relevant sources on Sudan wherever they may be available.” Although the experts were explicitly given the discretion to determine for themselves the ABC’s rules of procedure, importantly, such rules were approved by all members of the ABC.

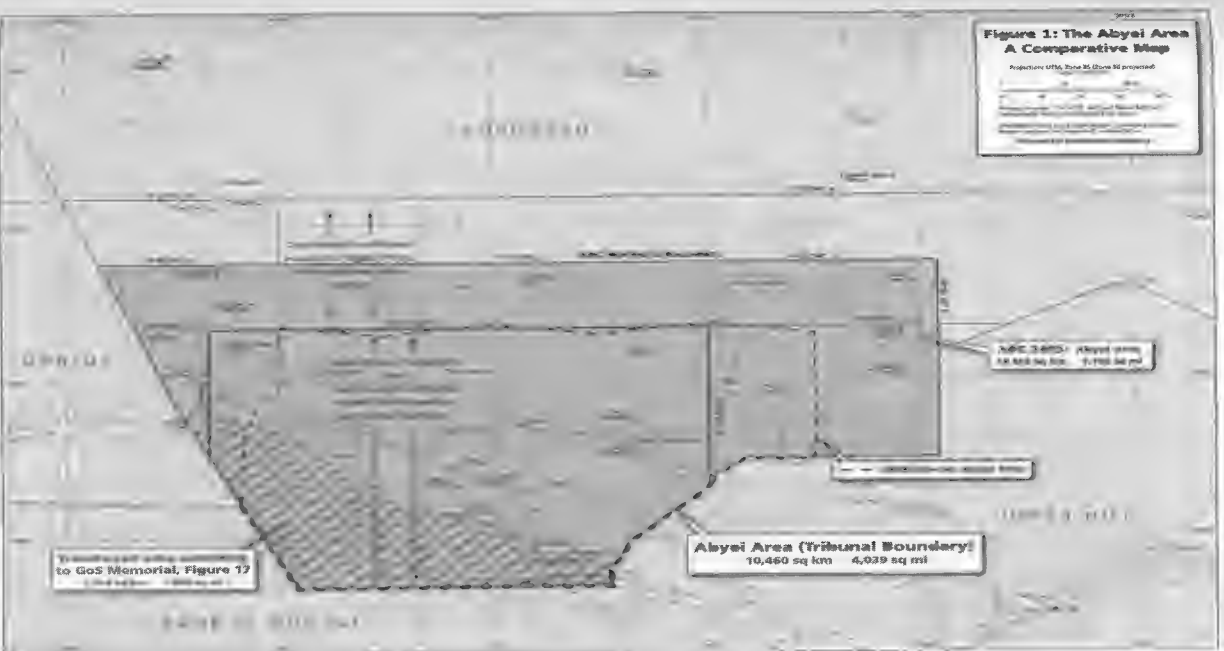
The ABC was duly constituted and commenced its task immediately following the signing of the CPA in January 2005. On 14 July 2005, seven months later, the experts delivered the ABC report to the Presidency of the Republic that consisted of President Omer al-Bashir and the two Vice Presidents who were the main negotiators of the CPA, namely Dr John Garang, the First Vice President and President of the Government of Southern Sudan, and Ali Osman, the Vice President. Being unable to reconcile the diverging positions of the various parties, and due to the insufficiency of the colonial record relating to the placement of the Abyei Area in 1905, the ABC experts turned to the administrative practice of the Anglo-Egyptian Condominium and the legal issues surrounding shared resource use to determine the borders of the Abyei Area (Johnson, 2008). Since the Ngok Dinka were transferred as a whole to Kordofan in 1905, and it was contrary to condominium practice to divide a single tribal group across boundary lines, the experts determined that the border between the Ngok and Missiriya, as it stood prior to the 1905 transfer, must have bisected the shared resource area between the Ngok and Missiriya as shown in Figure 1.

The ABC carried out its work without complaints from either party regarding the conduct of the proceedings, the formulation of the definition of the Abyei Area, or the preparation of the final ABC Report. In fact, the GoS affirmed on various occasions its acceptance that the Commission’s decision would be “final and binding” and that the Report would be put into “immediate effect” (SPLM, 2009). However, despite its clear commitment to respect and abide by the experts’ findings, the GoS began to retreat from its earlier commitment immediately after the report was presented to the Presidency of the Republic (Johnson, 2008). Once it deemed the ABC report unfavorable to its pre-determined position, the GoS waged a calculated campaign against the report, particularly the mandate of the ABC experts.

On the celebration of the second anniversary of the CPA in Juba, the capital of Southern Sudan, in January 2007, the President of the Republic, Omer Hassan al-Beshir, stated in his speech that the ABC had exceeded its mandate and unjustifiably asserted that the commission adopted the borders of 1965 rather than those of 1905. The president reiterated his rejection of the ABC report in a speech in November 2007, when he stated the “Abyei Boundaries Commission exceeded its mandate and they had no power to do so” (ibid). The position of GoS is that the ABC experts exceeded their mandate

by not relying on the administrative borders which existed between Kordofan and Bahr el Ghazal provinces immediately prior to the transfer of the Abyei Area to Kordofan in 1905.

Figure 1: A comparative map of the contested Abyei Area.



The Abyei Arbitration Agreement:

The GoS's refusal to implement the ABC report continued for almost three years. During this period, the provisions of the CPA relating to Abyei Area were obstructed and denied effect by the GoS. On 16 May 2008, fighting erupted in Abyei Town that was widely believed to be caused by the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) together with their local allied militia. Abyei Town was virtually obliterated and burnt to the ground with thousands of Ngok Dinka citizens displaced into the bush (McCrummen, 2008).

After this fighting in Abyei Town, efforts were made to resolve the disputes of the two parties over the ABC report. On 8 June 2008, President Omer al-Beshir and the Chairman of the SPLM, Salva Kiir Mayardit, signed the Roadmap for Return of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and Implementation of the Abyei Protocol (Abyei Roadmap). The Abyei Roadmap called for resolution of the dispute over the ABC report through international arbitration. According to the terms of the Roadmap, the resolution of the dispute over the Abyei Area boundaries was entrusted to an unspecified, but "professional and specialized" arbitration tribunal, whose decision the parties agreed to "abide by and implement".

On 21 June 2008, representatives of the NCP and SPLM signed the Joint NCP-SPLM Understanding on the Main Issues of the Abyei Arbitration Agreement (Memorandum of Understanding). The Memorandum of Understanding provided that the arbitration would take place under the auspices of the Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA) in The Hague and laid out a preliminary understanding for how the arbitration would operate. On 7 July 2008, the GoS and the SPLM as signatories of the CPA signed the Arbitration Agreement on Delimiting the Abyei Area (Arbitration Agreement).

The Arbitration Agreement expanded upon the foundations laid by the Roadmap and the Memorandum of Understanding by designating a process by which the arbitrators would be selected, specifying the operating procedure of the tribunal, allocating costs, and setting up a preliminary timeframe for the arbitration proceedings. The Arbitration Agreement further noted that the Arbitration Agreement itself, the Abyei Roadmap and the Memorandum of Understanding, the CPA, the Abyei Protocol and its Appendix, the Interim National Constitution (INC), and "any general principles of law and practice" that the tribunal deemed relevant, would act as applicable law binding on the proceedings.

The Abyei arbitration process:

The Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA) was to provide the tribunal, the SPLM, and GoS with technical support and assistance during the arbitration process, including the provision of a venue in which to hold the hearings. The PCA was chosen to ensure that the proceedings of the tribunal would be carried out in accordance with the parties' agreements and specified rules of procedure and in a transparent manner that would allow the public to follow the process. The tribunal consisted of five world-renowned arbitrators, including Professor Pierre-Marie Dupuy (Chairman of the Tribunal), Judge Awn Al-Khasawneh, Professor Gerhard Hafner, Professor W. Michael Reisman, and Judge Stephen Schwebel. The SPLM and GoS each selected two arbitrators to serve on the tribunal, and the PCA selected Professor Dupuy to serve as Chairman. All arbitrators signed declarations of independence, impartiality, and commitment to the proceedings as agreed upon by the parties.

Issues before the tribunal:

The scope of the dispute before the tribunal was whether the ABC experts had exceeded their mandate. In the Arbitration Agreement, the parties asked the tribunal to do the following:

1. To determine whether or not the ABC experts had exceeded their mandate, which was "to define (i.e. delimit) and demarcate the area of the nine Ngok Dinka chiefdoms transferred to Kordofan in 1905". Should the tribunal find the ABC experts did not exceed their mandate, the tribunal is required to make a declaration to that effect and issue an award for the implementation of the ABC Experts' Report as final and binding; and
2. To define the Abyei Area on a map, based on the parties' submissions in the event that the tribunal found that the ABC experts did exceed their mandate.

The final award of the Abyei Arbitration

Prior to the announcement of the final award, the SPLM requested from the tribunal one week's notice for the parties to make preparations for how to manage the decision. In its reply to the SPLM's request, the GoS instead asked the tribunal to defer the award announcement for one month in order to prepare for a reconciliation process among the communities. The SPLM opposed this request and asked the tribunal to respect the terms of the

Arbitration Agreement. The tribunal decided in the SPLM's favor and invited the chiefs of the Ngok Dinka and Missiriya to attend the announcement of the award on 22 July 2009 in the Hague. In a near consensus decision, four of the five tribunal members issued their eagerly awaited final decision with the fifth arbitrator issuing a dissenting opinion which has no binding legal effect on the parties. The tribunal's award agreed with the majority of the legal arguments presented by the SPLM as discussed below.

The alleged violations on excess of the mandate

In its submissions, the GoS raised eleven alleged violations by the ABC experts categorized into procedural violations, substantive excess of the mandate, and violations of mandatory criteria. The GoS's arguments, the SPLM's response and tribunal's opinions are summarized below.

Alleged procedural violations

The GoS argued that several alleged acts or omissions by the ABC experts amounted to procedural violations sufficient to constitute exceeding the mandate. The GoS claimed the following procedural violations: first, the experts allegedly took evidence from Ngok Dinka informants without procedural safeguards and without informing the GoS; second, the experts allegedly unilaterally solicited and relied on an email from a United States government official to establish their interpretation of their mandate; and third, the experts allegedly failed to act through the ABC as a whole in reaching their decision and failed to seek a consensus among the parties before rendering their final report. In response, the SPLM argued that allegations of procedural irregularities do not constitute an "excess of mandate" and that, alternatively, the GoS had to demonstrate "serious prejudice" in order to invalidate the ABC experts' findings on procedural grounds but had failed to do so. The tribunal categorically accepted the SPLM's arguments and determined that the Arbitration Agreement did not permit the tribunal to review the GoS's alleged procedural violations. The tribunal further agreed with the SPLM in finding that even if alleged procedural violations supported a finding of excess of the mandate, the alleged procedural violations must have resulted in "significant injustice", and the GoS proved no such injustice.

Alleged substantive excess of the mandate

The GoS offered two alleged substantive excess of mandate arguments. First, the GoS claimed that the ABC experts acted *ultra petita*; that is, the experts, by conferring rights to the Ngok Dinka outside the Abyei Area and by limiting the Missiriya's traditional rights, decided issues outside the scope of the dispute that the parties had submitted. Second, the GoS claimed that experts acted *infra petita*; that is, by employing a "tribal interpretation" of their mandate and providing for dominant and secondary rights, the experts refused to decide the question asked, answered a different question than that asked, ignored the stipulated date of 1905, and inappropriately allocated grazing rights to the Ngok Dinka outside of the Abyei Area.

The SPLM argued that the GoS's claim of *ultra petita* rested on its distorted reading of the ABC report and its claim of *infra petita* was based on nothing more than the GoS's substantive disagreement with how the ABC experts interpreted their mandate and with the ultimate decision with which it disagreed. The SPLM argued that under the Abyei Arbitration Agreement and based on the applicable law, neither of the GoS's substantive excess of mandate arguments formed a basis upon which the tribunal could find that the ABC experts exceeded their mandate. The tribunal agreed with the SPLM in concluding that substantive errors were beyond the tribunal's jurisdiction of review.

The tribunal further determined, however, that the Arbitration Agreement required it to find that the ABC experts exceeded their mandate if the tribunal determined that the experts decided a question outside the scope of their competence, that is, acted *ultra petita*. The tribunal dismissed the GoS's allegations that the experts decided issues outside the scope of the dispute the parties submitted. The tribunal concluded that the ABC experts' decision that "[t]he Ngok and Missiriya shall retain their established secondary rights to the use of land north and south of [the] boundary" was reasonable and within the ABC experts' mandate as it conferred no new rights but merely established that its decision had no effect on existing customary rights.

Alleged violations of mandatory criteria

The GoS further alleged that the ABC experts committed the following four acts that violated "mandatory criteria:" First, the experts failed to give reasons for their conclusions; second, the experts, by defining the Abyei Area's boundary at 10° 22' 30" N, rendered a decision based on "equitable division", or taken *ex aequo et bono*; third, the experts applied "unspecified 'legal principles in determining land rights'"; and fourth, the experts attempted to allocate oil resources to the

Abyei Area in their definition of the transferred area. The SPLM's arguments prevailed on all of these allegations except for one. As discussed in greater detail below, the tribunal found that the parties' agreements did require the tribunal to conclude that the ABC experts exceeded their mandate if they failed to state sufficient reasons for their conclusions.

Did the ABC Experts exceed their mandate?

In answering the question of whether or not the ABC experts exceeded their mandate, the tribunal determined that it did not need to assess whether the ABC experts' conclusions were actually correct. Rather, the tribunal accepted the SPLM's arguments on this point and found that the correctness of the ABC's findings was not under review and that the parties only intended the tribunal to determine whether the ABC experts' definition of the Abyei Area was a "reasonable" discharge of their mandate. The tribunal further agreed with the SPLM's position that under the Arbitration Agreement the tribunal did not need to reject the ABC experts' final report in its entirety if the ABC experts only exceeded their mandate on discrete issues. In doing so the tribunal rejected the GoS's argument that any excess of the mandate would require the tribunal to completely reject the ABC experts' final report and redefine all of the Abyei Area's boundaries.

The tribunal determined that it could set aside those findings or conclusions rendered in excess of the ABC's mandate while still declaring other portions of the ABC Experts' Final Report to have been rendered within the ABC's mandate. This finding is crucial to the tribunal's final award, as the tribunal ultimately determined that some, but not all, of the ABC experts' conclusions were rendered in excess of the ABC's mandate. Subsequently, those conclusions of the report that were not rendered in excess of the ABC's mandate remained untouched by the tribunal.

In determining whether the ABC experts exceeded their mandate, the tribunal assessed two different aspects of the ABC experts' work: first, the experts' understanding or interpretation of their mandate, and second, the experts' implementation of their mandate.

The ABC Experts' interpretation of their mandate

In determining the scope of its own mandate and the standard of review it should apply to the issues placed before it, the tribunal reviewed applicable international law and practice on the matter. In light of the task the parties gave to the tribunal under the arbitration agreement and the manner in which that task was laid out, the tribunal concluded, the "ABC experts possessed the

authority to interpret their mandate and, thus, the limits of their jurisdiction.” As such, the tribunal determined that, within the context of its analysis of the arbitration agreement, it was required to defer to the ABC experts’ interpretation of their mandate. In arriving at this finding, the tribunal agreed with the SPLM’s argument advanced during the arbitral proceedings that the ABC experts were vested with the competence to interpret the scope of their own mandate.

Further accepting the SPLM’s arguments, the tribunal determined that it was not proper for it to assess the correctness of the ABC experts’ interpretation of their mandate. Rather, the tribunal assessed whether the ABC experts’ interpretation of their mandate was reasonable. In doing so, the tribunal recognized that the parties freely consented to having the ABC delimit and demarcate the Abyei Area, and to the extent the ABC experts’ findings were in line with the parties’ consent, the tribunal would not upset them.

After assessing the character of the ABC experts’ work, the tribunal accepted the SPLM’s arguments and determined that the ABC experts adopted a tribal interpretation of their mandate. This tribal interpretation characterizes the 1905 transfer of the nine Ngok Dinka chiefdoms to Kordofan as a transfer of the Ngok Dinka people as a whole. Applying the tribal interpretation to their mandate, the ABC experts determined that their duty was to identify where the people of the Nine Ngok Dinka Chiefdoms lived in 1905 and not where a provincial border was in 1905, as argued by the GoS. Indeed, the GoS pushed for a territorial interpretation of the ABC experts’ mandate, which required the experts to determine the exact area of land transferred from Bahr el Ghazal to Kordofan in 1905, irrespective of the location of all the Ngok Dinka people at that time.

The tribunal concluded that the ABC experts’ tribal interpretation of their mandate was reasonable and therefore not an excess of their mandate. The tribunal emphasized that a tribal interpretation of the ABC’s mandate was reasonable because it “further[ed] a key objective of the CPA, which is to submit, through a referendum, to the whole Ngok Dinka community the choice of either retaining the Abyei Area’s special administrative status in the North or joining the South”. The tribunal opined that the “rigid application” of the GoS’s territorial interpretation “could result in splitting the Ngok Dinka community depending on the outcome of the envisaged [Abyei Area] referendum”. According to the tribunal, application of the tribal interpretation “would result in the inclusion and the participation in the 2011 referendum of most members of the targeted community, the Ngok Dinka”. In this way, the tribunal affirmed that the 2011 Abyei referendum is meant to provide the Ngok Dinka with the exercise of their right to self-determination.

With this conclusion, the tribunal not only rejected the GoS's territorial argument, but also its primary claim that the Abyei Area should be no more than a narrow 14-mile wide strip of land just south of the Kiir/Bahr el Arab River, which would have excluded the majority of the nine Ngok Dinka Chiefdoms from the Abyei Area and Abyei Town itself. If the tribunal had adopted the government's "territorial" interpretation, it may have defined an Abyei area below the Kiir/Bahr el Ghazal River of no more than approximately 2714 square kilometers as shown in Figure 1.

The ABC Experts' implementation of their mandate

Having found the ABC experts' interpretation of their mandate reasonable, the tribunal next turned to the question of whether the ABC experts' implementation of their mandate constituted an excess of the mandate. The tribunal again emphasized that a review of the correctness of the ABC experts' conclusions was outside the scope of the tribunal's own mandate. However, based on the object and purpose of the CPA, the Abyei Protocol and its Appendix, and the Abyei Roadmap, the tribunal concluded that the ABC's mandate required the experts to state sufficient reasons for their findings. According to the tribunal, sufficient reasons are those which are "clear, coherent, and free from contradiction" and allow the "reader to understand how the ABC experts reached each conclusion". The tribunal emphasized the impact that the ABC experts' report would have on the peace process in Sudan and the lives of the Ngok Dinka and Missiriya, and asserted that these stakeholders were entitled to know the reasons upon which the ABC experts based their conclusions given the importance of the decision and its non-appealable nature.

Abyei Area's northern boundary

In applying the tribal interpretation, as did the ABC experts, the tribunal rejected the GoS's central argument that no Ngok Dinka lived above the Kiir/Bahr el Arab in 1905. Indeed, the tribunal affirmed the observations of the ABC experts that the Ngok Dinka occupied a vast area north of the river. The tribunal determined that the ABC experts provided sufficient reasoning to support their conclusion that the Ngok Dinka had a legitimate and permanent occupation of lands in 1905 not only above the Kiir/Bahr el Arab River, but also above the Ngol/Ragaba ezZarga River extending up to latitude 10° 10' 00" N as shown in Figure 1. On this matter, the tribunal concluded that the ABC experts did not exceed their mandate in defining the northern boundary of Ngok Dinka permanent settlement in 1905 at latitude 10° 10' 00" N.

The tribunal did find, however, that the ABC experts exceeded their mandate when they defined the Abyei Area's northern boundary at latitude $10^{\circ} 22' 30''$ N. The tribunal determined that the ABC experts did not provide sufficient reasons for setting the northern boundary as far as latitude $10^{\circ} 22' 30''$ N. As explained below, the tribunal affirmed that its decision has no effect on the rights of the Ngok Dinka to continue to graze their cattle and move above latitude $10^{\circ} 10' 00''$ N as per their traditional and historic practices. The tribunal's conclusion as to the definition of the northern boundary of the Abyei Area secures and protects, as a matter of justice, the better portion of the Ngok Dinka's homeland.

Abyei Area's southern boundary

Neither party questioned the ABC experts' definition of the Abyei Area's southern boundary as the 1956 Darfur-Kordofan-Upper Nile provincial boundaries. The tribunal also found no excess of the mandate with regard to the ABC experts' definition of the Abyei Area's southern boundary. As such, the tribunal confirmed the ABC experts' definition of the Abyei Area's southern boundary as the 1956 Kordofan – Bahr el Ghazal – Upper Nile provincial boundary. Thus, the southern boundary remains unchanged.

Abyei Area's eastern and western boundaries

The tribunal concluded that the ABC experts exceeded their mandate in defining the Abyei Area's eastern and western boundaries because the experts provided insufficient reasons to support their conclusions. Reviewing the submissions of the parties, acknowledging the relevance of oral history, according weight to distinct condominium maps and records, and placing importance on the opinions of various scholars and colonial administrators, the tribunal concluded that the area of the nine Ngok Dinka chiefdoms extended from longitude $29^{\circ} 00' 00''$ E in the east to longitude $27^{\circ} 50' 00''$ E in the west. The tribunal's definition of the Abyei Area's eastern and western boundaries awarded to the Ngok Dinka the majority of the lands the ABC experts originally defined as the Abyei Area.

The tribunal's definition of the Abyei Area's eastern boundary at longitude $29^{\circ} 00' 00''$ E rejected the GoS's contention that the Ngok Dinka never occupied any areas north of the Kiir/Bahr el Arab River and east of approximately longitude $28^{\circ} 45' 00''$ E. The tribunal's definition of the Abyei Area's western boundary at longitude $27^{\circ} 50' 00''$ E is further west than the Abyei Roadmap Agreement's Interim Boundary (at $27^{\circ} 55' 00''$ E), thereby expanding the Abyei Area Administration's jurisdiction as shown in Figure 1.

With respect to those lands to the east and west that have now been excluded from the Abyei Area, the tribunal did not opine on whether these areas belong to the North or to the South. This was not part of their mandate. Applying the tribal interpretation discussed above, the tribunal merely reached the conclusion that these areas were not part of the Ngok Dinka ancestral homeland in 1905. Whether these areas were part of the north or the South in 1956 will be determined by the Technical Ad-Hoc North-South Border Committee, established by the CPA.

The traditional grazing rights

To the extent that the ABC Experts' Report preserved the traditional grazing rights of the Ngok Dinka and Missiriya, the tribunal found that the ABC experts' conclusions were reasonable and not an excess of the mandate. The tribunal noted that general principles of law and practices usually provide that traditional rights remain unaffected by any boundary definitions. Indeed, throughout the award, the tribunal consistently emphasized that nothing in its final decision or reasoning affects, in any way, the traditional grazing rights of the Missiriya and other nomadic peoples. The tribunal noted that reference to permanent settlements in the definition of the Abyei Area by no means implies that other peoples "cannot, or will not be able to, use the area and its pastures". The tribunal further provided that the "exercise of established traditional rights within or in the vicinity of the Abyei Area, particularly the right of the Missiriya and other nomadic peoples to graze cattle and move across the Abyei Area, remains unaffected".

As mentioned above, the Ngok Dinka are also not limited to grazing or moving exclusively within the Abyei Area. The tribunal stated that "In respect of the ABC Experts' decision that '[t]he Ngok and Missiriya shall retain their established secondary rights to the use of land north and south of this boundary,' the ABC Experts did not exceed their mandate." This means that the Ngok Dinka, along with the Missiriya and other nomads, can continue to move their cattle north and south of the newly defined Abyei Area as per their traditional practices and customs.

The reaction and implementation of the Arbitration ruling

The decision of the Abyei tribunal was somewhat welcomed and received with great relief by the two parties, the Sudanese people, the international community and, importantly, the Ngok Dinka. The areas claimed by the two parties in

relation to the area awarded in the decision of the tribunal as presented in Figure 1 are summarized in Table 1.

On the basis of the information provided in Table 1, the SPLM has retained about 56% of its initial claim while the GoS retained 25% of its claims. Nonetheless, the two parties read the decision of the tribunal as being in their interests. In particular, the President of the Republic of Sudan welcomed the decision and made an emotional statement that they have won the case, reassuring the Missiriya that he will stand by them even at the expense of his position as President of the Republic. He went on to recognize the contribution of Missiriya during the civil war in fighting alongside the government and promised to return the favor. In fact, the President of the Republic associated himself with Missiriya to the extent that some criticized him for losing sight of the fact that he is the President of all the Sudanese people including Ngok Dinka (Sudan Tribune, 2009).

On the one hand, the SPLM leadership, particularly General Salva Kiir Mayardit, President of South Sudan, the First Vice President of the Republic and the Chairman of the SPLM, described the decision as a victory for all Sudanese and reaffirmed the commitment of the SPLM to the full implementation of the decision as a final settlement of the dispute over the boundaries of the Abyei Area (Dak, 2009).

Table 1: The area of Ngok Dinka as defined by the Abyei Arbitration Tribunal

Definition of Abyei Area by:	Abyei Area in Square KM	Abyei Area in Square Miles	Percentage of Claims	Line as in Figure 1
ABC Experts/SPLM	18559	7166	56%	Thin Line
Government of Sudan	2714	1048	25%	Shaded Lines
Abyei Tribunal	10460	4039		Thick Line

Dr. Riek Machar, the Deputy Chairperson of the SPLM and the SPLM Co-Agent to the Abyei Arbitration, described the ruling of the Arbitration as a victory for peace (Helata, 2009). The Ngok Dinka in Sudan and in the diaspora overwhelmingly welcomed the decision of the tribunal. On the other hand, a section of the Arab Missiriya tribe announced that they will not adhere to the ruling of the Abyei Arbitration and threatened to resort to force should the Dinka refuse to abandon the court's decision (Sudan Tribune, 2009). With this disagreement over the decision of the Abyei Arbitration, the SPLM Chairman took the initiative of calling the leaders of Missiriya and Ngok Dinka for a joint

meeting in Juba, the capital of South Sudan to explain to the two communities the decision of the tribunal. Contrary to the position held by the GoS, the leaders of Missiriya expressed concerns during the joint meeting that they had lost the case and felt betrayed by the government, accusing it of only being interested in oil and not its people.

In its effort to legitimize the acceptance of the decision of the Abyei Tribunal, the government of Southern Sudan and the Southern Sudan Legislative Assembly unanimously adopted and endorsed the decision of the Abyei Arbitration Tribunal as final and binding. Prior to the meeting of the Presidency of the Republic to discuss the decision, the SPLM prepared a number of issues for effecting and implementing the decision of the Abyei Tribunal and Abyei Protocol. These issues include the adoption of the decision of the Abyei Arbitration, formation of an Abyei Demarcation Committee consisting of equal members from the two parties, and a joint Oversight Committee to oversee the work of the Demarcation Committee. Based on these recommendations, the Presidency of the Republic adopted and endorsed the decision of the Abyei Tribunal and formed the Abyei Demarcation Committee with equal membership, but with the Chairmanship and the secretary of the Committee from the GoS. The agreed-upon joint Oversight Committee for the demarcation of the boundaries of the Abyei Area was not formed.

Despite these positive measures taken by the Presidency, the decision was wrongly interpreted by the GoS, particularly in relation to the North-South Border and the Abyei Referendum. Although the award only defined the area of the Ngok Dinka transferred to Kordofan in 1905, and only referred to the North-South border as defined on 1 January 1956, some senior officials in the GoS including the President of the Republic wrongly concluded that the areas to the east and west of the newly defined Abyei Area are now part of Northern Sudan. Such statements were not only inconsistent with the decision but have the potential to trigger additional disputes over the North-South border. The CPA had provided for the formation of a North-South Border Committee that was mandated to demarcate the North-South border as it stood on 1 January 1956. The committee was formed immediately after the conclusion of the CPA and was expected to submit its final report to the Presidency of the Republic. The GoS should have waited for the report of the committee rather than use the decision of the Abyei Arbitration to settle an issue that was outside the mandate of the Abyei Tribunal Arbitration.

Equally, one of the key and fundamental aspects of the decisions of the Abyei Arbitration Tribunal is its resolution to adopt the tribal rather than territorial interpretation of the mandate of the ABC experts. This resolution is not only reasonable but also consistent with the key objective of the CPA

of giving the whole of the Ngok Dinka the right to make a choice of whether to continue with special administrative status in Northern Sudan or join South Sudan. Despite the adoption of the tribal interpretation as a basis for defining the area of the Ngok Dinka, some officials from the GoS assured the Missiriya that they will equally have the right to participate in the Abyei Referendum not as individual residents but as a community. The President of the Republic made it clear that Northern Sudanese would be called in to the Abyei Area during the conduct of the Abyei Referendum to participate in the referendum and ensure the vote for the Abyei Area to remain in Northern Sudan.

Despite the endorsement of the ruling of the Abyei Arbitration Tribunal by the Presidency of the Republic and acceptance of the parties to the ruling, the actual implementation of the ruling in demarcating the boundaries on the ground did not take place. After the formation of the Abyei Demarcation Committee in August 2009, the actual demarcation of the boundaries that was expected to finish in September 2009 did not progress. Pursuant to the ruling of the Abyei Arbitration Tribunal, the task of the Demarcation Committee was to lay out the boundaries of the Abyei Area and to plot out and mark the boundaries with 28 pillars and markers. Only four pillars had been installed, all in southern locations, and the committee had been consistently denied access to northern boundaries and even threatened with death and bodily harm by some elements of the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) and Missiriya Popular Defence Forces sponsored by the GoS (Winter, 2009). Consistent with earlier concerns about the commitment of the GoS to the CPA, Winter describes the lack of implementation of the ruling of the Abyei Arbitration Tribunal as typical of the GoS which is known for not respecting agreements they sign (*ibid*).

Equally, when the Sudan National Legislature discussed the law for the conduct of the Abyei Referendum in 2011, the NCP members headed by Missiriya members in the National Assembly wanted to include Missiriya as eligible voters in the Abyei Referendum. This move in the National Assembly was consistent with the earlier promise by some senior members of the GoS to the Missiriya community about Abyei's future. Such a move and promise were all at odds with the Abyei Protocol and the decision of the Permanent Court of Arbitration. Although the Abyei Referendum Law was passed by the National Legislature with an overwhelming majority in accordance with the provisions of the Abyei Protocol, members of the Missiriya walked out from the discussion of the law and threatened to take the law into their hands if they were excluded from the Abyei Referendum (Mukhtar, 2009).

The Post-Abyei Award: No Peace No Referendum

The Abyei Arbitration Award has triggered academic debate about the efficacy of international arbitration not only in resolving inter- and intra-border state disputes but also whether it can contribute to peace-building. The primary aim of the Abyei Arbitration was to contribute to the implementation of the peace agreement by defining the area of the Ngok Dinka for the conduct of Abyei Referendum that would allow the Ngok Dinka to determine the administrative status of their area. Since the announcement of Abyei Award in May 2009, the area has not been demarcated as per the award, and the referendum was not conducted; the area was instead attacked and devastated by the government of Sudan in 2011, resulting in enormous human suffering and displacement of the Ngok Dinka from their homeland.

Although the award, despite its good intention, was not the cause of insecurity in the area, it also did not result in peace and stability in Abyei nor did it prevent the violence, chaos and human tragedy experienced by the Ngok Dinka (Gary and Raviv, 2017: 223-224). While some argued that the Abyei Arbitration provides a good example that international arbitration can and does serve as a useful dispute mechanism (Milan and Mallet, 2010), others argue instead:

If states are not held to their promises, then they will no longer honor such agreements. As international law rests on consent; and if consent is not honored and enforced, then the foundation of international law scrambles and states will inevitably resort to other methods to secure their interest. Tragically, this is precisely what occurred following the Abyei Award (Gray and Raviv, 2017:222).

The government of Sudan, despite its consent to the full implementation of the Abyei Award, failed to comply with the provisions of the Abyei Arbitration Agreement that was an integral part of the CPA. In fact, the Abyei Arbitration Agreement was part of the conflict resolution mechanisms for the smooth implementation of the CPA. The IGAD, AU, UN and Trioka countries (US, UK and Norway) that mediated and witnessed the CPA and were tasked by the parties to monitor the implementation of the CPA failed to enforce the Abyei Award and allowed the government of Sudan to use violence to secure its interest in Abyei. The award is a litmus test of the inability of the regional and international bodies to enforce international law.

After the defiance of the government of Sudan not to implement the award and its refusal to hold the referendum for the Ngok Dinka to decide the administrative status of their area, the two governments of Sudan and South Sudan resorted to the African Union (AU) to find an African solution to

their conflict in Abyei. The AU Peace and Security Council (AUPSC) adopted a roadmap in 2012 with the consent of the two governments and tasked the AU High-Level Implementation Panel (AUHIP) to mediate between the two countries to agree on the resolution of the pending issues in the CPA, including the issue of Abyei, and to recommend final and binding proposals on these pending issues if the two countries failed to agree.

When the two countries failed to agree on resolving the issue of Abyei, the AUHIP presented a proposal to the AUPSC on 21st September 2012 on the final status of Abyei. The AUHIP Proposal was largely informed by the award of Abyei Arbitration, particularly in resolving the issue of eligibility in Abyei referendum to be members of Ngok Dinka but not Missiriya nomads as the award clearly defines the border between the Ngok Dinka and Missiriya nomads. Despite the full acceptance of the AUHIP Proposal by the AUPSC, the government of Sudan defied the decision of AU and rejected the African solution to Abyei conflict. With AU unable to enforce the AUHIP Proposal on the final status of Abyei, the Ngok Dinka were left with no other option but to conduct their own community referendum in October 2013 on the basis of the AUHIP Proposal, with the overwhelming majority opting to be part of South Sudan.

Although the government of Sudan is well known for dishonoring peace agreements, its failure to comply with the Abyei Arbitration Agreement is more attributed to the lack of regional and international enforcement mechanisms. The case of Abyei arbitration clearly shows that without national, regional and international enforcement mechanisms or legally binding enforcement instruments provided for in arbitration agreements, parties such as the government of Sudan are free not to comply with international law and to resort to violent means to pursue their interests.

Conclusion

The decision by SPLM to agree to enter into the arbitration process on an issue that was resolved in the CPA was a risky decision: It marked a fresh renegotiation of the CPA, but it also showed its commitment to resort to peaceful means and international law in resolving dispute between the parties to the CPA. The Abyei Arbitration Tribunal was the first of its kind in the history of Sudan and probably in Africa as it has defined the tribal boundaries of an ethnic community, the Ngok Dinka of Abyei. Besides defining the area of the Ngok Dinka, the award has resolved the critical issue of eligibility of those who would vote in the Abyei Referendum. Specifically, the Abyei Arbitration Tribunal upheld the tribal interpretation in determining the boundaries of the

Ngok Dinka of Abyei in order to further a key objective of the CPA which is to submit, through a referendum, to the whole Ngok Dinka community the choice of either retaining the Abyei Area's special administrative status in the North or being part of the South.

Although the award has not been implemented by GoS, the Ngok Dinka of Abyei have at least managed to resolve their ancestral land issue. This has been central in their decision not to return to South Sudan without their land. This had of course never been considered and was only a misinterpretation by some Ngok elders. With the inability of regional and international bodies to enforce the award and the AUHIP Proposal on the final status of Abyei, the Ngok Dinka were left with no other option but to conduct their own referendum that overwhelmingly affirmed their will to be part of South Sudan.

Importantly, the award has shown the need for regional and international enforcement mechanisms to ensure the parties to the arbitration agreements adhere and comply with international law; otherwise the foundation of international law will scramble and non-law abiding states such as Sudan will be let off the hook to perpetuate violence, atrocities and crimes against humanity.

Chapter Ten:

Abyei:

A Trajectory of Broken Commitments

Luka B. Deng Kuol

Introduction

Abyei is one issue that has dominated the quality of relations between Sudan and South Sudan since Sudan's independence in 1956. The 1905 transfer of the Ngok Dinka from Southern Sudan to northern Sudan by the British colonial administration with the good intention of protecting them from slave raids by the Arab nomads has turned into misery and suffering that will continue to haunt the Ngok Dinka of Abyei. The history of Abyei shows the pivotal role played by Abyei in the relations between North and South Sudan.

Abyei has been described as a bridge between Northern and Southern Sudan, and the people of Abyei now despise such description. One traditional leader of Ngok Dinka once told me that this narrative of Abyei as a bridge has lost its meaning, as the bridge has been broken by repetitive history of dishonoring the political rights of the Ngok Dinka. Despite its potential role as a thread that stitches together Sudan and South Sudan, Abyei is increasingly perceived as a "dagger" in current South Sudan-Sudan relations. This chapter

provides an account of the trajectory of impasses and dishonoring of the political commitments aimed at resolving the final administrative status of Abyei Area.

The Genesis and Trajectory of Broken Commitments

The genesis of dishonoring the commitment to return the Ngok Dinka of Abyei to South Sudan can be traced to the period of the Anglo-Egyptian rule. Despite the fact that in 1951 the Ngok Dinka, under the influence of their Chief Deng Majok, decided to be part of the administration of northern Sudan, they reserved the right to withdraw from northern administration and return to southern administration within five years. Notwithstanding Chief Deng Majok's disappointment in the northern administration's mistreatment of his people and the efforts by some Ngok Dinka elites to exercise the right to return back to South Sudan before the independence of Sudan in 1956, the Anglo-Egyptian regime ended its rule hurriedly, without acting on such rights of Abyei Area people.

During the negotiations of the Addis Ababa Agreement in 1972 and in recognition of the role the people of Abyei played during the first civil war, the status of Abyei and its return to the administration of Southern Sudan was discussed and resulted in sharp differences that threatened the conclusion of the peace agreement. At last a compromise was reached by expanding the definition of the territory of South Sudan as provided for in Article 3 (iii) of the Addis Ababa Peace Agreement 1972 to be:

the Provinces of Bahr El Ghazal, Equatoria and Upper Nile in accordance with their boundaries as they stood on January 1, 1956, and any other areas that were culturally and geographically a part of Southern Complex as may be decided by a referendum.

Similar to its contribution to imposing the 'closed districts' policy of 1922 and developing the 'Southern Policy' in 1930, Abyei has undoubtedly contributed to the redefinition of the territory of South Sudan to include not only the Ngok Dinka of Abyei but also other ethnic groups that were annexed to northern Sudan before Sudan's independence in 1956. Although the Addis Ababa Accord did not specify which areas were 'culturally and geographically' part of the 'Southern complex', nor did it provide a mechanism for identifying such areas, the Agreement provided a more encompassing political definition of South Sudan. In fact, this new definition of the Southern Sudan territory would have allowed the political elites in Southern Sudan to claim all areas such as Nuba Mountains and Blue Nile that were included in "the Closed Districts" Policy of 1922 as part of the South.

Despite the repetitive demands by the people of Abyei to decide the final administrative status of their area through the exercise of referendum as provided for in the Addis Ababa Peace Agreement, the government of Sudan dishonored its commitment in the Agreement by disallowing the referendum. Also, the politics of the ruling elites in the southern regional government that was so dependent on gaining allegiance from the ruling northern elites in Khartoum contributed to the failure to conduct the referendum for Abyei's people. Despite the overwhelming and consistent demand by the southern regional parliament to conduct the Abyei referendum, various leaders of the southern regional government were unable to raise the Abyei referendum with Khartoum, thereby contributing to the eruption of the second civil war in 1983.

Post-Addis Ababa Agreement: A new wave of broken promises

The second civil war that erupted in early 1983 was largely caused by the failure of the northern ruling elites to implement the Addis Ababa Agreement, particularly the referendum for the people of Abyei where the second civil war started in 1981. Since the eruption of the second civil war, there have been many agreements and declarations on resolving the conflict in Sudan between and among opposition groups on one hand, and individual opposition groups and the government of Sudan on the other hand. These subsequent agreements and declarations provide an account of how the commitment in resolving the final status of Abyei in the Addis Ababa Agreement was neglected and undermined.

The Torit Resolutions in 1991:

The SPLM had been consistent in pursuing its political vision of establishing the New Sudan that is secular, democratic, and united as articulated in its Manifesto of 1983. While this vision of the New Sudan was an attempt to address the root causes of the conflict in the Sudan, it did not explicitly address the issue of Abyei, as the people of Abyei wanted their area returned to South Sudan regardless of whether Sudan was united or separated. This political agenda of the New Sudan was challenged when Dr. Riek Machar and Dr. Lam Akol broke out from the SPLM in August of 1991 and retreated to the agenda of self-determination for the people of Southern Sudan, defined narrowly as per the boundaries of 1st January 1956. This was the beginning of how the

southern elites failed to build on what had been achieved in the Addis Ababa Peace Agreement.

In reaction to the new political agenda of the SPLM splinter group of Dr. Riek and Dr. Lam, the SPLM Political Military High Command met in Torit in September 1991, deciding in its Resolution 3.2:

“in any future peace initiatives and talks, the position of the SPLM/A on the system of government shall be based on resolving the war through a united secular democratic Sudan, confederation, association of sovereign states or self-determination.”

This resolution, particularly the inclusion of the self-determination option, was seen as implying that the political project of the unified “New Sudan” was abandoned by the SPLM. However, the SPLM provided various options for managing diversity in the Sudan and the right of self-determination was not restricted to the people of South Sudan, but bestowed upon all the people of Sudan.

The Frankfurt Agreement, 1992:

In order to sharpen the division within the SPLM and to win over the SPLM splinter group, the government of Sudan of the National Islamic Front (NIF) initiated a meeting with Dr. Lam Akol in Frankfurt in January 1992. This meeting resulted in a short agreement to be known as the “Frankfurt Agreement or Declaration” which had far-reaching political consequences. Specifically, the Agreement stated: “the people of the South shall exercise their right to freely choose the political and constitutional status that accords with their national aspirations, without ruling out any option.”

Although the Agreement did not explicitly state the right of self-determination and secession for the people of South Sudan, it marked a critical political shift in Sudan’s history. It was the first time that the northern ruling elites in Khartoum recognized the right of self-determination for the people of Southern Sudan.

On the basis of the Frankfurt Agreement, the US administration initiated a meeting in Washington between Dr. John Garang and Dr. Riek Machar in October 1993 with the aim of unifying the various factions of the SPLM. Although this meeting did not achieve that end, Dr. John Garang and Dr. Riek Machar signed separate statements that included a reference to the right of self-determination for Southern Sudan as the only way to bring peace to the Sudan. The fact that Dr. John Garang, Chairman of the SPLM, signed a statement recognizing the right of self-determination for the people of Southern Sudan yet lacking any reference to the people of Abyei, Nuba Mountainss, or Blue

Nile indicated that the SPLM had been lured into the limited definition of South Sudan of 1956, raising serious concerns about the commitment of the SPLM to its political project of the "New Sudan".

The SPLM Chukudum Resolutions, 1994:

In efforts to define a clear, collective and unified political direction and to clarify its signed statement in Washington in 1993 and resolutions in Torit in 1991, the SPLM convened its first national convention in Chukudum in April 1994. The convention was attended by representatives from all liberated areas in the former three regions of Southern Sudan, Southern Kordofan, Southern Blue Nile and the diaspora. In its Resolution 1, the convention defined the New Sudan to consist of Bahr el Ghazal, Upper Nile, Equatoria, Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile. The convention resolved to consider Abyei as part and parcel of Bahr el Ghazal region, the region from which Abyei was carved out in 1905. The convention also resolved the right of self-determination not be restricted to the people of Southern Sudan but extended to all the oppressed people of the New Sudan as spelled in its Resolution 12.5.0 that states: "The National Convention also resolves that the Interim Period for such an Interim Arrangement shall not exceed two (2) years after which a referendum of self-determination shall be held to ascertain the wishes of the oppressed people of the New Sudan".

With these resolutions of its National Convention, the SPLM not only returned Abyei Area to the Bahr el Ghazal region, but also adopted the expanded definition of the territory of South Sudan as provided for in the Addis Ababa Peace Agreement of 1972. However, with these resolutions, the SPLM was seen to be influenced by the Frankfurt Agreement and to have retreated from its initial political project of the "New Sudan" that included the entire Sudan. For the people of Abyei, the resolution of the SPLM National Convention of annexing Abyei Area to Bahr el Ghazal was a major watershed in having clear political stance for resolving the final status of their area.

The IGAD Declaration of Principles, 1994

Peace talks between the Sudanese warring parties that were mediated by the Nigerian government in 1994 failed. With this, IGAD, on the basis of the principle of subsidiarity and as the regional organization closest to the crisis, took over the Sudan peace mediation. In an attempt to resolve the conflict in the Sudan, IGAD prepared a draft Declaration of Principles in July 1994 to guide the Sudan peace negotiations. In particular, Principle 2 of the Declaration

stated clearly: “The rights of self-determination of the people of South Sudan to determine their future status through a referendum must be affirmed.”

Although the government of Sudan initially rejected this IGAD Declaration and then accepted it later in 1997, the SPLM accepted this Declaration as the basis for negotiating with the government of Sudan. The IGAD Declaration was also endorsed by the July 1994 Cairo Agreement, and concluded by the SPLM and Democratic Union Party (DUP). This made DUP the first Northern Sudanese party to accept the right of self-determination for the people of Southern Sudan (Salman, 2013). The fact that the SPLM accepted the IGAD Declaration without a clear reference to the special conflicts of Abyei, Nuba Mountains and Southern Blue Nile sent a negative signal of the fate of the New Sudan political agenda.

The Chukudum Agreement, December 1994

With DUP becoming closer to the SPLM after signing the Cairo Agreement, its political rivalry, the Umma Party, initiated negotiation with the SPLM as a way to politically outwit the DUP (*ibid*). This negotiation took place in Chukudum, in the SPLM liberated areas in Southern Sudan, and resulted in signing the “Chukudum Agreement” in December 1994. Specifically, Article 3 of the Agreement states that the parties: “affirm their acceptance of the right of self-determination for the citizens of Southern Sudan, provided that such right to be exercised through free referendum to be monitored by international community.”

However, the parties recognized their disagreement on the exercise of such right of self-determination by the people of Abyei, Nuba Mountains and Ingassana Hills in Article 4 of the Agreement. While the SPLM demanded such right of self-determination be exercised by the people of Abyei, Nuba Mountains and Ingassana Hills in Article 4.1 of the Agreement, the Umma Party rejected the right of self-determination for Nuba Mountains, Abyei Area and Ingassana Hills that were considered to be outside Southern Sudan in Article 4.2. This position of the Umma Party contradicted the provision of Article 2 that affirmed the right of self-determination as a basic right for peoples and nations.

Although the SPLM maintained the strong position that the right of self-determination be exercised by the people of Abyei Area, Nuba Mountains and Ingassana Hills, there was a feeling of betrayal among the Abyei elites in the SPLM. Unlike other agreements and declarations, this Agreement was unique in explicitly excluding Abyei Area in the definition of Southern Sudan. In their meeting with General Salva Kiir, who signed the Agreement on behalf

of the SPLM, the delegation of Abyei elites that included myself expressed their dissatisfaction with the Chukudum Agreement as the SPLM was expected to at least defend the definition of Southern Sudan as agreed upon in the Addis Ababa Agreement of 1972. The argument of the Umma Party that Abyei Area was outside the territory of South Sudan was based on the boundaries of 1st January, 1956 that were adjusted in the Addis Ababa Agreement to include any other areas culturally and geographically a part of Southern Complex as may be decided by a referendum.

After the signing of the Chukudum Agreement, in December 1994, Mr. Deng Alor organized a meeting in his house in Nairobi between Bona Malual, accompanied by Ambrose Riny Thiik, and some Abyei elites, including myself. In defending the Agreement that he had brokered, Bona Malual tried to explain that the issue of Abyei had not been left out and that it would be resolved at a later stage. Bona Malual was blamed for omitting Abyei from the definition of the territory of Southern Sudan. Such blame was based on the fact that the elites of Abyei Area looked up to Bona Malual as one of their leaders and sons of the area not only because his community, Kuac, was historically curved out from Abyei Area but also because of his special relations with Dr. Francis Deng and Dr. Zacharia Bol. However, his recent statement that Abyei is unequivocally part of Sudan as per 1st January, 1956 boundaries and his reiteration of the position of his political party, the Southern Front, that defined Southern Sudan in 1964 as per 1956 boundaries clearly reveals that Bona Malual still stands by the position his political party held in 1964.

Asmara Declaration, June 1995

It is argued that as the SPLM secured the acceptance of the right of self-determination for the people of Southern Sudan from the main leading northern political parties, it worked to commit DUP and the Umma Party to sign one agreement (*ibid*). This resulted in the signing of the "Asmara Declaration" on 23rd June 1995 by all members of the National Democratic Alliance including DUP, Umma Party, the SPLM, Alliance of Sudanese African Parties, the Communist Party, the Legitimate Leadership, Trade Unions, Beja Conference and the Sudanese Alliance Forces.

Unlike other agreements and declarations, the Asmara Declaration provided a holistic approach in addressing the conflict in the Sudan. Besides recognizing the right of self-determination as the basis for addressing the root causes of conflict in the Sudan, the Declaration recognizes the exercise of such right by the people of South Sudan, both within the 1956 boundaries and extended to ascertain the views of those in the other war-affected areas of Abyei, Nuba

Mountainss and Ingassana through referendum about their future political and administrative status.

Despite its definition of South Sudan within the 1956 boundaries, the Declaration provides comprehensive provisions for resolving the conflict in Abyei Area and corrects the omission of Abyei, Nuba Mountainss and Ingassana in the Chukudum Agreement. Specifically, Paragraph 5 of the Declaration states:

Ascertaining the views of the people of Abyei Area regarding their desire to remain within the administrative boundaries of Southern Kordofan state or to become part of Bahr el Ghazal region will be done through a referendum to be organized during the transition period, but before the South exercised its right of self-determination. If the result of the referendum showed the desire of the majority of the people of Abyei to become part of Bahr el Ghazal region, then they will exercise the right of self-determination as part of the people of Southern Sudan.

In fact, the SPLM succeeded in reflecting most of the resolutions of its first national convention in the Declaration, particularly in addressing not only the conflict of South Sudan but also other conflicts in Abyei, Nuba Mountainss and Ingassana. Although the Declaration was described as very optimistic and simplistic and guided by the short-term aim of toppling the NIF government (*ibid*), this Declaration undoubtedly provided a solid basis for addressing the grievances of the people of the New Sudan.

The Khartoum and Fashoda Peace Agreements, 1997

With this considerable achievement by the SPLM in unifying all the Sudanese opposition groups under one umbrella of the NDA and guided by the Asmara Declaration to address the root causes of the conflict in the Sudan, the government of Sudan felt politically threatened and opted to look for political allies from South Sudan. It initiated peace negotiations with various southern political groups such as the SPLM splinter group of Dr. Riek Machar, the South Sudan United Democratic Salvation Front (UDSF), the Equatoria Defense Force (EDF), and the South Sudan Independents Group, and on 21st April 1997 concluded the "Khartoum Peace Agreement." Also, the Fashoda Peace Agreement that was signed on 20th September 1997 by the government of Sudan and SPLM splinter group, led by Dr. Lam Akol, endorsed the Khartoum Peace Agreement with minor amendments and additions.

This Agreement defines Southern Sudan as "Southern States", to include the ten southern states arising from the former provinces of Bahr el Ghazal, Equatoria and Upper Nile with their boundaries as they stood on 1st January

1956. The Agreement also affirms that the people of South Sudan shall exercise the right of self-determination through a referendum. It is not surprising that the Agreement focuses mainly on addressing the grievances of the people of South Sudan. Despite its exclusion of Abyei Area in its narrow definition of South Sudan, this Agreement recommends a conference to resolve the Abyei conflict instead of a referendum as agreed upon in the 1972 Addis Ababa Agreement. In particular, General Principle 5 of the Agreement states: "The problem of Abyei has been discussed and a final solution is referred to a conference on Abyei that will be convened in the area within the interim period."

It is interesting that in this Agreement, the mechanism for resolving the issue of Abyei was relegated to a vague conference to be held in the area. This Agreement is another example of how the political elites of South Sudan could have such a short memory to the extent of not remembering how the territory of South Sudan had been defined in the 1972 Addis Ababa Peace Agreement. Given the leading role that the people of Abyei played in the second civil war, one would expect the southern elites in this Agreement to retain at least what the people of Abyei had achieved in the Addis Ababa Agreement in 1972. Although the two agreements were not implemented, the referendum for the people of Southern Sudan was not conducted, and the conference to resolve the final status of Abyei was not convened, the southern elites who signed the two agreements clearly showed their readiness to compromise or even abandon the issue of Abyei.

The Machakos Protocol, 2002: The Abandonment of Abyei

With its successful political and diplomatic maneuver in the Asmara Declaration in convincing all Sudanese opposition groups to accept the right of self-determination as the effective way of resolving conflicts in the Sudan, the SPLM was well equipped to negotiate with the government of Sudan. Besides its political success, the SPLM was militarily strong and had succeeded to reunite with its splinter group, South Sudan Defense Forces (SSDF) led by Dr. Riek Machar, in January 2002.

Despite this enormous comparative advantage, the SPLM signed the "Machakos Protocol" with the government of Sudan on 20th July 2002, affirming the right of self-determination for the people of South Sudan without any reference to conflicts in Abyei Area, Nuba Mountains or Ingassana Hills. Specifically, Article 1.2 of the Agreed Principles of the Protocol states: "the

people of South Sudan have the right to self-determination, inter alia, through a referendum to determine their future status.”

Unlike the Khartoum Peace Agreement that was not taken seriously by the government of Sudan or the international community, the Machakos Protocol was undoubtedly a serious turning point in the history of Sudan. The right of self-determination for the people of Southern Sudan was affirmed as a political right, exercised through a referendum to be monitored by the international community. Despite its success in affirming the right of self-determination for the South, the Protocol not only failed to recognize the conflicts in Abyei, Nuba Mountainss and Southern Blue Nile but also marked the abandonment of the New Sudan vision.

Similar to the Khartoum Peace Agreement, the Machakos Protocol failed to define South Sudan as provided for in the 1972 Addis Ababa Peace Agreement. For the people of Abyei, the Machakos Protocol was a betrayal and an abandonment by the SPLM of their cause despite their enormous sacrifices in the second civil war. In fact, the Khartoum Peace Agreement was even better than the Machakos Protocol as the issue of Abyei was at least discussed and a vague and weak mechanism for resolving it was provided. What angered the people of Abyei more was that the Machakos Protocol was negotiated by the SPLM senior leaders of Bahr el Ghazal region (Gen. Salva Kiir, Nhial Deng and Deng Alor) and signed by Gen. Salva Kiir Mayardit, the lead negotiator of the SPLM.

The Abyei Protocol, 2004: The US Rescue Mission

After the signing of the Machakos Protocol and exclusion of issues related to other areas outside South Sudan, the government of Sudan was in a stronger position to resist any discussion and negotiation with the SPLM about the conflicts in Abyei, Nuba Mountainss, Southern Blue Nile and Darfur. It was after serious pressure from the region and international community that the government of Sudan agreed to discuss the conflicts in the three areas, but under Kenyan mediation rather than IGAD mediation.

The discussion of the conflict in Abyei was one of the most difficult issues during the negotiation between the SPLM and the government of Sudan. While the government of Sudan claimed that Abyei is part of northern Sudan, the SPLM argued for an administrative decision to annex Abyei to the Bahr el Ghazal region where it was carved out by the colonial authorities. This argument was supported by the historical record provided by Douglas Johnson, a leading historian on Sudan and South Sudan, which clearly shows that the Ngok Dinka of Abyei were transferred in 1905 from Bahr el Ghazal province to Kordofan

province as an administrative measure to protect them from the slave raids by the Arab Missiriya.

When the Security Arrangements Agreement was signed on 25th September 2003, the Wealth Sharing Agreement on 7th January 2004 and then the Power Sharing Agreement was almost ready and about to be signed, the government of Sudan made it extremely difficult to conclude agreement with the SPLM on the three areas. Although the SPLM delayed the signing of the power sharing agreement until agreements were reached on all of the three areas, there was considerable pressure from some senior leaders of the SPLM on Dr. John Garang, the leader of the SPLM and the SPLM lead negotiator, to conclude the peace agreement without the three areas and particularly Abyei Area.

In order to unify the position of the SPLM on the conflicts in the three areas of Abyei, Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile, Dr. John Garang called for a meeting of the leadership of the SPLM in Naivasha, Kenya. During this meeting some very senior leaders of the SPLM were very clear that Abyei should not be an obstacle to peace in South Sudan, particularly after the right of self-determination was guaranteed for the South. Some of these leaders argued that the South should not be a hostage because of Abyei and that the peace agreement should be signed and then the issue of Abyei would be discussed and resolved at a later stage, during the implementation of the peace agreement. However, Dr. John Garang was clear that there would not be any peace agreement without Abyei, Nuba Mountainss and Southern Blue Nile and convinced the meeting attendants that the SPLM would not let down the people of the three areas.

With the impasse on Abyei that threatened the collapse of all protocols agreed upon by the SPLM and the government of Sudan, on 19th March 2004 the US Special Envoy Senator John Danforth presented the two parties a proposal entitled "Principles of Agreement on Abyei" with ultimatum to the parties to either take it or leave it. The SPLM and the government of Sudan immediately adopted these principles as the basis for the resolution of Abyei conflict that was signed on 26th May 2004. The most important principle is Principle 1.3 that states: "Simultaneously with the referendum for Southern Sudan, the residents of Abyei will cast a separate ballot. The proposition voted on in the separate ballot will present the residents of Abyei with the following choices, irrespective of the results of the southern referendum: (a) That Abyei retain its special administrative status in the north; (b) That Abyei be part of Bahr el Ghazal."

Unlike the Asmara Declaration that strategically set the timing of the Abyei referendum before the South Sudan referendum, the US Proposal set the Abyei referendum and South Sudan referendum to be conducted at the same time.

Another important aspect of these principles is that Abyei Area is defined as the area of the nine Ngok Dinka chiefdoms transferred to Kordofan Province in 1905. Also, the Protocol provided for dual citizenship of the people of Abyei and an autonomous self-administration with special status. In a way, the US Proposal on Abyei succeeded in correcting the serious omission of Abyei Area from the definition of Southern Sudan territory in the Machakos Protocol.

African Solutions to African Problems: Abyei as the Litmus Test

Despite the signing of Abyei Protocol by the SPLM and the government of Sudan in 2005, its implementation proved to be most difficult and it became one of the CPA Protocols that remains unimplemented. In July 2005, the government of Sudan rejected in one of the first meetings of the institution of the Presidency (President Bashir, First Vice President Dr. John Garang and Vice President Ali Osman), the final and binding report by the Abyei Boundaries Commission (ABC) that defines the area of the Ngok Dinka transferred in 1905. Instead, the Sudan Armed Forces attacked and devastated Abyei Area in 2008.

In an effort to save the CPA and to maintain peace and stability after the invasion of Abyei in May 2008, on 8th June 2008 President Bashir and President Salva signed the Abyei Roadmap for the return of the displaced Ngok Dinka and the implementation of Abyei Protocol. In this Roadmap, as a signatory of the CPA and upon the request of the government of Sudan, the SPLM agreed to take the dispute over the report of ABC for a final and binding international arbitration. On 7th July 2008, the government of Sudan and SPLM as signatories of the CPA signed the Arbitration Agreement on Delimiting (defining) the Abyei Area.

Under the facilitation of the Hague Permanent Court of Arbitration and after a process that took nine months and involved the two parties and almost all leaders of Ngok Dinka and Arab Missiriya nomads, the Abyei Arbitration Tribunal passed its ruling on 22nd July 2009 and redefined the area of Ngok Dinka as approximately 10,460 square kilometers (almost 54 percent less than the area defined by the ABC) (Deng, 2010). The tribunal noted that its decision is meant to ensure the inclusion and participation of most members of the Ngok Dinka in Abyei referendum as its main targeted community. While President Bashir welcomed the decision of the Abyei Arbitration Tribunal on 22nd July 2009 with an emotional statement that they had won the case, on the same day President Salva described the decision as a victory for all Sudanese

and reaffirmed the commitment of the SPLM to the full implementation of the decision as a final settlement of the issue of Abyei Area.

While the ruling of the Abyei Arbitration Tribunal was seen to resolve both the determination of the Ngok Dinka area and the eligible participants in the Abyei referendum, President Bashir insisted that the Arab Missiriya nomads participate in the Abyei referendum and refused to establish a Abyei Referendum Commission chaired by a nominee of the SPLM as previously agreed upon by the parties. Subsequently, the referendum of Abyei did not take place simultaneously with that of South Sudan on 9th January 2011 as stipulated in the CPA. Instead, Sudan invaded Abyei again in May 2011 and displaced Ngok Dinka from their home areas.

Final and Binding Resolution of the Final Status of Abyei

The AU Roadmap

In order to rescue the Abyei Protocol and to assist in returning the Ngok Dinka to their home areas, on 20th June 2011 the SPLM and the government of Sudan signed the Agreement on the Temporary Arrangements for the Administration and Security of the Abyei Area. In particular, the Agreement provides for the process for resolving Abyei's final status with a commitment by the parties to consider, in good faith, proposals that the African Union High-level Implementation Panel (AUHIP) shall offer to resolve the final status of Abyei. The AUHIP presented six proposals for amicably resolving the final status of Abyei as a win-win outcome, but President Bashir and President Salva could not agree on any of these six proposals.

In an effort to put the two countries on the track of peace, on 24 April 2012 the AU Peace and Security Council (AUPSC) came with a roadmap providing a three-month framework for holistically resolving all pending issues between the two states including the final status of Abyei. The Roadmap made it very clear that if the parties failed to agree on any of the pending issues, the AUHIP will come with a proposal endorsed by the AUPSC as a final and binding resolution and forward it to the UN Security Council for implementation under Chapter VII of UN Charter.

Prior to the submission of its proposal to the AUPSC, President Mbeki, the chairperson of the AUHIP, wrote a letter to President Bashir and President Salva dated 17th September 2012 urging them to work in a spirit of mutual viability on a negotiated win-win outcome on the final status of Abyei. He supported the need for a negotiated outcome by arguing that since the two countries had

accepted the ruling of the Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA) that defines Abyei Area as the area where the Ngok Dinka enjoyed “dominant rights”, then the Missiriya nomads would not be eligible to vote in the referendum and subsequently the majority Ngok Dinka would vote to be part of South Sudan, the outcome of which would be a zero sum of “win-lose.”

When the parties failed to agree on a negotiated way to resolve the issue of Abyei and remain consistent with the AU Roadmap, on 21st September 2012 the AUHIP submitted a proposal to the AUPSC on the final status of Abyei. This Proposal provides clarity and addresses fundamental questions in many areas: eligibility for an Abyei referendum (only residents but not nomads); date of the referendum (October 2013); chair of Abyei Referendum Commission (appointee of the AU Commission); special status of Abyei Area (status of state in two countries); and oil revenue from Abyei Area to be allocated to Abyei state (30%), national government (50%) and localities north of Abyei Area in Southern Kordofan State (20%) for five years.

The Proposal was prepared by three prominent African leaders (former President of South Africa, former President of Nigeria and former President of Burundi). There is no other African solution to an African problem than the AUHIP proposal on the final status of Abyei Area. As Sudan has been calling for the issue of Abyei to be resolved within the African context, the AUHIP Proposal on Abyei is an African solution prepared by African leaders without any influence from western countries. This Proposal is one of the best achievements of the AUHIP as it is well informed and rooted in earlier agreements, and above all is bold in addressing the issues that prevented the conduct of Abyei Referendum on 9th January 2011.

On 24th October 2012, the meeting of the AUPSC at the level of permanent representatives accepted the AUHIP Proposal as representing a fair, equitable and workable solution to the final status of Abyei: It takes into account existing agreements entered into by the parties, as well as the needs and interests of the communities on the ground. The AUPSC requested the two countries to engage each other to reach consensus on this proposal within a period of six weeks. It also decided that, in the event that the two countries failed to reach agreement on the final status of Abyei, the AUPSC would endorse the AUHIP's Proposal as final and binding, and would seek the endorsement by the UN Security Council of the same.

On 14th December 2012, the AUPSC meeting at the level of foreign ministers reiterated its acceptance of the AUHIP's Proposal on the final status of Abyei. Despite the Sudan's refusal to accept the AUHIP's Proposal and given that the deadline set by the AUPSC for the two countries to agree on the AUHIP Proposal had expired on 5th December 2012, the AUPSC, instead of

seeking UN Security Council (UNSC) endorsement, referred the determination on the issue of the final status of Abyei to its meeting at the level of heads of state and government.

On 24th January 2013, a summit between President Salva Kiir and President Bashir was held in Addis Ababa and the two presidents failed to agree on the final status of Abyei. President Kiir, in his address to the AUPSC meeting on 25th January 2013 at the level of heads of state and government, made it clear that he had reached a deadlock with President Bashir on the final status of Abyei. The Council only reaffirmed its acceptance of the AUHIP's Proposal but did not forward the Proposal to the UNSC for endorsement as per its commitment in the Roadmap and after the failure of the two Presidents to agree on the final status of Abyei. Paradoxically, the meeting strongly again urged the two presidents to resume their negotiations on the final status of Abyei as proposed by the AUHIP. It requested also the AUHIP, with the support of the IGAD Chair, continue to assist the two presidents to urgently resolve the issue of Abyei, and requested the AUHIP report to the Council in March 2013 to make further determination on Abyei.

Unfortunately, the AUPSC did not meet in March 2013 to receive a report from AUHIP on the status of negotiation of the parties over its proposal. With the indecision and delay by the AUPSC to forward the AUHIP's Proposal to the UNSC for endorsement, the Ngok Dinka Paramount Chief Kuol Deng, who wanted to see his people exercise their right of self-determination, was assassinated on 4th May 2013 by the government-armed Missiriya militia. The Council then reacted by holding a meeting on 7th May 2013 and again urged the two presidents to reach agreement on the final status of Abyei.

On 24th May 2013, the two presidents met in Addis and failed to agree on the final status of Abyei. President Bashir made it clear that he rejected the AUHIP Proposal on Abyei. While it became apparent that President Bashir rejected the African solution to the Abyei problem, on 29th July 2013 the AUHIP reported to the meeting of AUPSC at the level of ministers of foreign affairs. The AUHIP expressed concern in its report that the Ngok Dinka may try to use the deadline of October 2013 to create a *fait accompli*. Given such circumstances of no agreement between the two countries, in its report the AUHIP reiterated the AUPSC's view that the AUHIP Proposal in its entirety forms the basis for a fair, equitable and workable solution to the matter of Abyei and should be implemented as it stands and in accordance with the timetable as proposed, unless both governments of Sudan and South Sudan presented agreed amendments to this proposal. Yet, the meeting attendees failed to forward the AUHIP Proposal to UNSC for endorsement.

Abyei Community Referendum: Fait Accompli

This trajectory of indecision and inconsistency in the decision-making process in the AUPSC over the final status of Abyei has contributed towards sacrificing the safety, security, and livelihoods of the Ngok Dinka. The most apparent iteration of this indecisiveness of the AU came when the Ngok Dinka Paramount Chief was assassinated. This has also created an environment that strengthens the government of Sudan and its armed Arab Missiriya militia to benefit from the status quo not only by scooping 65,000 barrels of crude oil per day from Abyei Area but also by cleansing the area of its Ngok Dinka inhabitants and settling the Arab Missiriya nomads in the northern part of Abyei Area.

As the two countries and the AU failed to set a new date for the conduct of Abyei Referendum, the Ngok Dinka of Abyei decided to proceed with the conduct of their own referendum. In a conference on 18th October 2013, the people of Abyei, represented by the nine Ngok Chiefdoms and the civil society organizations, declared their intent to conduct their own referendum 27th – 29th October 2013 as per the AUHIP Proposal. This declaration was meant to give a chance for the two countries and the AU to set a new date for the conduct of Abyei referendum.

The conference confirmed the formation of Abyei Community Referendum High Committee. This Committee was mandated to facilitate the conduct of Abyei referendum and advocate for recognition of the referendum outcome. The conference also passed rules and regulations for the conduct of Abyei referendum. These rules were based on Abyei Protocol 2005, the ruling of the Hague Permanent Court of Arbitration 2009, and the AU Proposal on the Final Status of Abyei 2012. They also provide for the formation of Abyei Referendum Commission with the clear definition of eligible voters to be members of Ngok Dinka and other residents with permanent abode in Abyei Area, as provided for in the AUHIP Proposal. On the basis of these rules, the High Committee appointed the Abyei Community Referendum Commission.

In reaction to the intention of the Ngok Dinka of Abyei to conduct their own referendum and based on the recommendation of AUHIP in July 2013 for the AUPSC to visit Abyei, the AUPSC decided to visit Abyei on 26th and 27th October 2013 but the visit was denied by the government of Sudan. In its meeting on 26th October 2013, the AUPSC expressed its disappointment and regret that it was unable to visit Abyei, considered it an obstruction to the discharge of its responsibilities, and held those who obstructed its visit to bear full responsibility for any resulting negative development in the Area. With this obstruction of the work of AUPSC, the government of Sudan not

only rejected the final and binding AUHI Proposal but also disrespected the institutions of AU.

With the failure of AUPSC to visit Abyei and no new date set for the Abyei referendum, the Abyei Community Referendum Commission registered the eligible voters and conducted the referendum peacefully over a period of three days. The outcome of the referendum overwhelmingly (99.98 percent) favored Abyei becoming part of South Sudan. Most international and local observers and journalists were amazed by the orderly way in which the referendum was organized and conducted. Tim Flatman and Hannah Cross, independent international observers who witnessed the conduct of Abyei referendum, were satisfied with the high standards exhibited by the Abyei referendum process. They described this referendum as peaceful, credible and conducted in a high level of transparency that accurately represents the genuine expression of the will of the people of Abyei.

After its failure to visit Abyei Area, the AUPSC met in Addis on 26th October 2013, the same day the Community Referendum commenced, and reiterated its earlier decisions on the Abyei issue, in particular its full acceptance of the AUHIP Proposal. For the first time, the Council strongly urged the UNSC to extend its full support to the AUHIP Proposal, which it considers the best way forward in addressing the issue of Abyei. The Council explicitly demanded Sudan refrain from obstructing its work and reminded Sudan of its obligations under the Peace and Security Council Protocol, particularly the agreement of member states to accept and implement the Council's decisions.

The AUPSC eventually managed to visit Abyei Area on 5th November 2013, after the conduct of Abyei Community Referendum, and held its meeting in Abyei on 6th November 2013. Interestingly, the Council did not condemn the conduct of community referendum but instead underscored the inalienable right of the people of Abyei to self-determination, and recognized that it had listened to the expression of deep frustration and anger as well as reasons for the action of the Ngok Dinka community. It also reiterated its full acceptance of the Proposal submitted by AUHIP on the final status of Abyei and renewed its appeal to UNSC to urgently support the Proposal as the best way forward for resolving the Abyei issue.

Since its full acceptance of the AUHIP Proposal and its appeal to UNSC to support the AUHIP Proposal in October and November 2013, the AUPSC has failed to officially forward the AUHIP Proposal to the UNSC for endorsement and support as per the AU Roadmap. Instead, the AUPSC has backtracked from its Roadmap and its full acceptance of the AUHIP Proposal by continuing, as reflected in its report to AU Assembly in July 2017, to urge the two governments

of South Sudan and Sudan to commence discussions on the conduct of Abyei Referendum in line with the CPA.

The case of Abyei provides a compelling reason for necessary reforms in AU and its institutions to strengthen their institutional and organizational capabilities to deliver better and to meet the aspirations of the continent's people. In particular, the AU Peace and Security Council (AUPSC) that was established as standing decision-making body for the prevention, management and resolution of conflicts, may need scrutiny. The Council's failure to forward the AUHIP Proposal to the UNSC and apparent lack of monitoring of the implementation of its decisions and commitments put into doubt the call by AU of African solutions to African problems. In fact, the failure of AU to resolve the final status of Abyei, a simple case that exhausted all national, regional and international avenues for conflict resolution, is a litmus test for the inability of AU and its institutions to deliver peace and uphold the slogan of "African solutions to African problems".

Conclusion: What does the future hold for the people of Abyei

This account of the inability to resolve the final status of Abyei Area shows the continuous search by the Ngok Dinka to find a peaceful and secure political environment. Despite this genuine search for the final status of Abyei, there are paradoxically voices in South Sudan, particularly from some Dinka elites of the former Warrap state, calling not only the Ngok Dinka as not South Sudanese but also unequivocally denying Abyei Area as part of South Sudan.

In one of the meetings of the Council of Ministers in Juba, a national minister from Warrap state commented: "The people of Abyei are like people of Kashmir. Kashmir people do not occupy key positions in India and Pakistan. So Abyei people are not South Sudanese and should not occupy key positions in South Sudan." This statement was made immediately after the appointment of Gen. Pieng Deng Kuol as the Inspector General of South Sudan Police. Also, in its report to UN Human Rights Commission, the government of South Sudan described me as not a citizen of South Sudan because of a symposium that I organized in the University of Juba about 28 states abruptly created by President Salva Kiir. Also, Bona Malual, a member and the patron of the Jieng Council of Elders (JCE) and the rapporteur of the National Dialogue of President Salva Kiir, described unequivocally that Abyei is not part of South Sudan.

Besides these statements made by senior government officials about the status of Abyei Area, many senior civil servants from Abyei were deliberately removed from their key positions in civil service immediately after the conduct of Abyei Community Referendum in 2013. For example, Arop Bagat and Mustafa Biong, the most senior civil servants from Abyei Area, were removed from their positions in the Ministry of Information. Also, Dr. Monywaar Arop, one of the most senior medical doctors during the liberation struggle, was removed from his advisory position in the Ministry of Health. In addition, most SPLA senior officers from Abyei Area, such as Pieng Deng, Kuol Diem, Dr. Kuol Deng, Arop Moyak, and Monydhang Deng were removed from the SPLA. Some of our senior ambassadors, among them Dr. Chol Deng Alak and Dr. Arop Deng (Haroun), were abruptly recalled from their embassies. Gen. Pieng Deng, the former Inspector General of Police, was also removed from his position before the end of his tenure.

Despite this deliberate targeting and isolation of the Abyei people in the government of South Sudan, the patriotic contribution of the Ngok Dinka during the 21 years of liberation struggle is indisputable. The second civil war started not only in Abyei, but its sons and daughters, such as Miokol Deng and Bagat Agwek, also played a critical role in the early formation of SPLA and consolidation of its leadership. Their bravery during the liberation struggle was recognized by Commander Kerebino Bol, the then deputy chairman of the SPLM, who used to refer to any brave SPLA soldier as 'Ma'Ngok'. It became a new military vocabulary in the SPLA for defining bravery. One would even say that Abyei Area during the second civil war is one of the areas in South Sudan that has the highest percentage of martyrs in relation to its population.

Although such heroic contribution of the people Abyei is becoming blurred in the eyes of some elites in Juba, the people of South Sudan do recognize and appreciate such contribution. This is well reflected in the Transitional Constitution of the Republic of South Sudan, 2011, which defines Abyei Area as a territory of South Sudan and its people as citizens and nationals of South Sudan. Specifically, Article 97 of the Constitution states: "The members of the nine Ngok Dinka Chiefdoms of Abyei Area shall have an inalienable right to enjoy South Sudanese citizenship and nationality and all rights and freedoms guaranteed by this Constitution".

When Abyei was invaded by Sudan in May 2011, the people of South Sudan in all ten states showed their solidarity with the people of Abyei by demonstrating against the invasion and mobilizing resources for displaced persons. This was a clear sign that the people of South Sudan see the Ngok Dinka of Abyei as their kith and kin. Also, during the conduct of Abyei Community Referendum, the people of the ten states and their parliaments congratulated

the people of Abyei for their overwhelming decision of affirming membership as part and parcel of South Sudan. Despite the statement in October 2013 by Michael Makuei, the spokesperson of the government of South Sudan, that the government of South Sudan will not be part of any unilateral decision taken by the Ngok Dinka, the members of the national parliament were overwhelmingly ready to recognize the outcome of the Referendum if the government were to present such a bill.

The unwavering solidarity of the South Sudanese people with their kith and kin in Abyei Area is very reassuring, foreseeing that the outcome of Abyei Community Referendum will eventually be implemented through the will of the people of South Sudan. The unfortunate statements and utterances made by some elites in Juba should not discourage the people of Abyei but should make them even more determined to pursue the fulfillment and realization of their choice in the referendum. As the decision of the final status of Abyei is now with the AU, the current government of South Sudan or any other future government will either pursue the diplomatic mechanism through AU and UN to conduct Abyei referendum in accordance with AUHIP Proposal or recognize the outcome of the Abyei Community Referendum. They compared the case of Abyei to that of Crimea whose referendum was engineered, recognized and implemented by Russia. But needless to say, Russia is not South Sudan and even then its support has been internationally condemned as illegal.

While the people of Abyei will be waiting for resolution of their final status, Ethiopia as Chair of IGAD, the AU, UN, and US government (the drafter of Abyei Protocol, 2005) are called upon to encourage the two governments of South Sudan and Sudan to agree on a temporary mechanism that would allow the Ngok Dinka of Abyei to govern themselves under the current mandate of United Nations Interim Force for Abyei (UNISFA). During this period of self-rule, some provisions of the AUHIP Proposal related to return and rehabilitation of internally displaced persons, soft borders, pastoralist rights, and social and economic development of the area and its adjacent areas in South Sudan and Sudan could be implemented within the context of a Common Economic Development Zone (CEDZ). Although Abyei is increasingly seen as a dagger in the relations of the two countries, the implementation of AUHIP Proposal such as CEDZ will restore Abyei and allow it to play its historic strategic role in strengthening relations between the two countries.

Chapter Eleven:

Interim Stabilization of Abyei

Francis Mading Deng

This chapter comprises several pieces documenting efforts to promote the interim stabilization of the Abyei Area without prejudice to the determination of its final status in accordance with the Abyei Protocol of the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement. The first is a proposal I submitted to the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) on May 19, 2014, when I was the Permanent Representative of South Sudan to the United Nations, the second is a presentation of the proposal to potential donors in Juba, South Sudan on 27 June, 2018, and the third is a joint statement by a Missiriya leader and myself in our capacities as concerned elders from our respective areas. The fourth follows up the joint statement with stabilization action plan. The last is a program of reconstruction and development of the area which we agreed upon. Both the third and the final documents were shared with senior members of the Sudan government who endorsed them.

The Stabilization Proposal

I would like to begin by thanking the members of the Security Council for giving me the opportunity to share my views on an issue not only of great concern to our country of South Sudan, but also to me personally. As I am sure at least some members of the Council know, I come from Abyei. However, I

hope that what I have to say is objective and constructive enough to gain the understanding and support of the Council members.

First, I would like to commend the Secretary-General for his report, which provides insightful analysis of the crisis situation in Abyei and offers constructive proposals on the way forward. I would also like to commend the UNISFA Head of Mission and Force Commander, Lieutenant-General Yohannes Tesfamariam, for his commitment and dedicated service under very trying circumstances. He has also been kind enough to keep me informed on developments in the area.

I have been in close contact with Ngok Dinka leaders, both in Juba and Abyei, including my brother Bulabek Deng, who succeeded our assassinated brother, Kuol Deng, as Paramount Chief. I met with members of the Strategic Review Team before and after their field visit. I also received from our Ministry of Foreign Affairs the ten-point recommendations which the Abyei community leaders presented to the team for strengthening UNISFA's mandate, and which have been well reflected in the Report.

The picture the Secretary-General's Report presents sadly reflects the realities on the ground as conveyed to me by these leaders. I should say that I have over the years had the opportunity to discuss the situation in Abyei with leading members of the Missiriya, Sudanese and South Sudanese leaders, and international mediators including the Chairman of the African Union High Implementation Panel (AUHIP) and former President Thabo Mbeki.

The situation now, in my opinion, has reached a point where creative ideas are needed to overcome the impasse on Abyei and to prevent the crisis from escalating into yet another catastrophic explosion in the region. The highest order of priority now is to stabilize the crisis situation in Abyei by establishing an effective administration and ensuring protection for the population to return, resettle and lead a secure and productive life without the threat of violent attacks from their neighbors.

In my opinion, the four options proposed by the Secretary-General present a critically important challenge for the United Nations and the Security Council in particular. Ending the UNISFA Mission and withdrawing the Ethiopian Forces cannot be a viable option, as it would leave a dangerous vacuum for the security of the area. Indeed, the best thing going for the population in the area is the presence of the international community through UNISFA. The recommendations of the Abyei community leaders are premised not only on the continuation of UNISFA's mandate, but also on its being reinforced and strengthened to play a greater and more effective role for the peace, security, and development of the area.

As the report also shows, the next two options, maintaining the status quo and UN assumption of responsibility to implement the AUHIP (Mbeki's) Proposal on Abyei, also pose significant problems. As is well known, President Salva Kiir accepted the proposal while President Beshir rejected it. We still stand in support of the proposal and would welcome further negotiations towards its implementation. The fourth option, which advocates inter-communal dialogue through the Abyei Joint Oversight Committee (AJOC) and the resumption of negotiations between the leaders of Sudan and South Sudan, is plausible, but has also confronted obstacles on both sides.

In my opinion, elements of options 2, 3 and 4 need to be combined into a hybrid proposal. UNISFA's presence, with strengthened capacity and mandate, is crucial, as is the urgent need to support Mbeki's Proposal and the equally urgent need to facilitate inter-communal dialogue to promote Ngok Dinka-Missiriya reconciliation. The combination of these elements has the potential for stabilizing the situation in Abyei and restoring cordial and cooperative relations between the Ngok Dinka and the Missiriya. The proposed four-month extension of the UNISFA Mandate, allowing more time to develop a durable solution to the Abyei problem, is a very short period that calls for a speedy search for alternatives.

What follows are ideas which I have informally discussed with the various stakeholders over the years, including leaders on both sides, and which I now present in the hope that they may provide a common ground for all concerned during the interim or transitional period, pending agreement on the final status of Abyei. The thrust of these ideas is to establish an autonomous Abyei Area under internationally supervised security arrangements in cooperation with the governments of South Sudan and Sudan. These arrangements would allow the area to stabilize, develop economically, and restore its historic position as a bridge between Sudan and South Sudan and a hub for trading livestock, grain, and other commodities in the entire border region.

The proposed arrangements should provide a framework for supporting the sustainable return, resettlement, reintegration, and socio-economic development of the Ngok Dinka population, with due consideration for, and response to, the needs of the nomadic Missiriya Humr within their area of normal residence as well as in the transitional zone of their dry seasonal migration in search of water and pasture in Abyei. It should be noted, however, that it is not only the Missiriya who migrate seasonally to the Abyei Area: South Sudan's herders, both Dinka and Nuer, from several states also escape floods during the rainy season by moving to drier areas in Ngok land. This makes Abyei a genuine crossroads and bridge between Sudan and South Sudan.

In light of the security situations in both Sudan and South Sudan, the fact that they are now deadlocked over Abyei is particularly dangerous for the region. The international community urgently needs to explore ways of reconciling the conflicting positions on Abyei by addressing two interrelated concerns: those of the Ngok Dinka who, though indigenous inhabitants of the area, perceive their very survival as a people to be at risk from persistent northern invasion, and those of the neighboring Missiriya Humr who, though nomadic herders, perceive their access to seasonal water and grazing to be threatened by the prospects of Abyei joining South Sudan.

The interim or transitional measures needed to address these concerns under UNISFA can be summarized in the following points:

1. Consolidating support for the establishment of an autonomous administration of the Ngok Dinka, including the three organs of government, executive, legislative, and judicial; and establishing a well-trained police force to maintain law and order;
2. Supporting the return and resettlement of the Ngok Dinka to their home areas in safety and dignity; and providing essential social services, particularly in the areas of health and education, and meeting the humanitarian needs of the returning and resident populations;
3. Facilitating the transition from humanitarian assistance to recovery and sustainable socio-economic development, including building roads, constructing upgraded housing, improving agricultural production, promoting the employment of youth and former combatants, and providing care for those made most vulnerable by war, especially women, children, and the elderly;
4. Identifying and meeting the immediate needs of the Missiriya and other nomadic peoples during their seasonal migration in search of water and pastures; and facilitating peace, reconciliation, and cooperative relations between the Ngok Dinka and the Missiriya Humr, as stipulated in the Abyei Protocol;
5. Ensuring regional and international support for these interim or transitional arrangements and their operational frameworks in cooperation with South Sudan and Sudan; soliciting financial backing from bilateral and multilateral donors, including the "TROIKA" (Norway, the United Kingdom and the United States), the African Union, the European Union and the United Nations; and guaranteeing that the oil revenues due to the local community are made available for the provision of services and development in the area.

These points should be seen in the context of the inter-connected conflicts in the border areas of Sudan and South Sudan. Abyei can become a flashpoint that compounds conflicts in both countries or can be a model for addressing the development and governance challenges lying at the roots of these regional conflicts, especially through a system of decentralization and devolution of powers.

What I have outlined here does not substitute for the various agreements over Abyei that were negotiated with international involvement but whose implementation is stalled. Rather, it should be seen as an interim or a transitional solution designed to promote peace, reconciliation, and cooperation among the various stakeholders and create a more conducive environment for determining the final status of Abyei.

Presentation to the Donors

I would like to begin by expressing my appreciation to all of you for making time to attend this meeting, and thanking in particular Ambassador Geert Geur of the Netherlands for organizing it.

Since many of you were at the meeting which the European Union Delegation convened two months ago and in which I gave a historical background and an account of the current challenges facing the area of the Ngok Dinka of Abyei, I will not bore you by repeating myself with details.

I will instead focus on a few issues to hopefully stimulate the discussion of the Proposal on stabilization of the area, and make the case for meeting the pressing needs of the Ngok Dinka and their neighboring communities to the north and south, in particular the Missiriya Arabs who traverse the area in the dry season in search of water sources and grazing lands. I will also address political sensitivities over the future status of Abyei between Sudan and South Sudan, and the strategic importance of considering and alleviating the legitimate concerns of the government of the Sudan and the neighboring ethnic communities to the north and the south in order to foster an inclusive cooperative approach to the normalization and socio-economic development of the area in the interest not only of the neighboring communities, but also of the two countries.

My starting point is that as a result of the stalemate over the political status of Abyei between Sudan and South Sudan, the Ngok Dinka, the indigenous population of the area, have been abandoned in a vacuum of virtual statelessness, without the responsibility for protection and assistance that is normally associated with the rights of citizenship. This has turned an area that has historically been a constructive bridge on which the neighboring

communities of the north and south of Sudan met, co-existed and interacted peacefully and cooperatively, despite their racial, ethnic, religious and cultural differences, into a battleground of violently devastating conflict between the neighboring communities and the now independent countries of Sudan and South Sudan. The Ngok Dinka, who have been the primary victims of this tragic development, cry out for international rescue operation to protect them, assist them to resume their normal life, and generate a self-sustaining process of socio-economic development.

Although the United Nations Interim Security Force in Abyei (UNISFA) is providing a much-appreciated level of protection, and the government of South Sudan is supporting a semblance of badly needed administrative presence in the area, the people of Abyei are now totally dependent on the international community for humanitarian assistance and very limited infrastructural and socio-economic development activities. Even the protection provided by UNISFA is restricted to a small fraction of Ngok Dinka territory. Most of the traditional home areas to which the Ngok would like to return remain without protection. Clearly UNISFA cannot provide protection where there are no people, but people cannot settle where there is no protection. This creates the dilemma of which one should come first, protection or settlement. The ideal is that both should occur simultaneously.

The gist of the proposal is that the area desperately needs a more comprehensive and effective program of service delivery and socio-economic development that build on the social and cultural values of the people, their institutional structures, and their traditional operational patterns. The plan is to adopt a strategy of transitional integration that makes effective use of the local resources and resourcefulness and approaches development as a process of self enhancement from within, combining self-reliance with well targeted complementary international support.

For this to be acceptable to key stakeholders and therefore operationally feasible, it must foster peace and security in the wider area by addressing not only the pressing needs of the Ngok Dinka, but also those of the neighboring communities in the region, specifically the nomadic Missiriya Arabs who enter the area during the dry season in search of water and pastures for their livestock. Like the Ngok Dinka, the Missiriya also have pressing needs for service delivery and socio-economic development in their own areas of normal residence, and they have particular needs for health and educational services as well as care for their livestock along their seasonal migration routes in the Ngok Dinka area and further into South Sudan.

Assessing the needs of the Missiriya, both in their home areas and during their seasonal migration, needs to be carried out by those familiar with their

conditions. The preparedness of the international community to assist in meeting their needs should also be made evident early to convey evenhandedness and moral equivalence in responding to the requirements of all the communities in the region. However, this should not be a reason to delay the immediate implementation of the agenda for the stabilization that is specific to the Ngok Dinka.

The ripple effects of meeting the needs of these neighboring border communities should contribute toward improving bilateral relations between Sudan and South Sudan and return the area to its historic role as a constructive North-South bridge of the Old Sudan as well as a conciliatory point of contact and interaction between the racial, ethnic, cultural and religious diversities of the country, now region.

The Proposed Stabilization Agenda should therefore operate on the dual track of meeting the needs of the communities in the region while also engaging the two governments of Sudan and South Sudan to cooperate with the international community in the delivery of essential services and support for the area's socio-economic development. This would not only be in the interest of their respective communities in the region, but also in the long-term mutual interest of both countries.

The activities envisaged in the Stabilization Agenda comprise two major components: a resource center that will provide a center piece for designing, managing, and overseeing the implementation of the program, and a model village that will construct settlements for the returnees and provide them with health and educational services as well as generate infrastructural and socio-economic development activities for the community, especially in the areas of agriculture and livestock health care and productivity.

The resource center will develop projects and programs that utilize the traditional age-set system that classifies men and women into age groups from youth through middle age and into the category of elders, with well-defined functions. While elders in the chief's council dispense justice and manage and resolve conflicts, young men who reach the required age for warriors are initiated to become the defenders of the society in war. In more recent times, however, their energies have been mobilized by the chiefs to perform public service in areas requiring physical strength, such as road construction, building public utilities like schools, health centers and court houses, and cultivating community agricultural farms. The age-set system has also been employed to assist members in cultivating private farms and building homes.

All of these activities used to be carried out with minimum incentives, mostly by providing food and drinks in work feasts or offering oxen as prizes in competitive farming. Some of the more rigorous functions, such as road

construction were competitively carried out by warrior age-sets and perceived as similar to warfare. Songs were in fact composed in which competing warrior groups bragged about their performance as compared with that of their competitors.

This was indeed the case with the project of integrated rural development in Abyei which we initiated in the 1970s and was implemented in cooperation with the Harvard Institute for International Development, with funding from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The project was specifically intended to experiment with a culturally oriented approach to development by applying the strategy of transitional integration which I had developed and expounded in my doctoral dissertation published in 1971 by Yale University Press under the title *Tradition and Modernization: A Challenge for Law Among the Dinka of the Sudan*. Our experience demonstrated the delicate balance between communalism and individualism in traditional Dinka society. While communal farms were established, individual farming was also supported. In the end, the individually owned and operated farms proved to be more productive than the communal farms. The element of competition with prizes for the winners was a pivotal motivation. This culturally oriented strategy of transitional integration can now be further developed, enhanced, and effectively applied with appropriate methods of recognition and remuneration.

The longer-term objective of the Stabilization program is to replicate Resource Centers and Model Villages throughout the nine chiefdoms of the Ngok Dinka. However, the traditional settlement pattern of the Dinka in which homes were wide spread and individual choices determined the arrangement of the homesteads should be considered in making arrangements for the convenience of service delivery. The balance of concentrated settlement and the individual choice for distances between homes is a delicate one that needs to be carefully catered for.

Although the Project is planned to be implemented in phases, it is ultimately quite substantial both qualitatively and quantitatively, and will require the financial and operational partnership of a number of funders and implementing agencies. The funding and implementing partners on the ground are currently very limited, but they provide an important base of operations that can be built upon to enhance the needed capacity for implementing the project. Specifically, the International Organization for Migration (IOM), whose head of mission in South Sudan is here with us, with funding from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), has been engaged in a variety of infrastructural and socio-economic development activities in the area that are pertinent to the objectives of the project.

Let me emphasize that although there has not yet been formal endorsement of the project by the key players, the gist of this proposal has been shared with the governments of both Sudan and South Sudan as well as with African Union leaders concerned with relations between the two countries, and was officially presented to the UN Security Council in 2014. I also discussed it recently with the leaders of the Sudan, including President Omer al-Bashir, his First Vice President, and the Minister of Foreign Affairs. No one, including from among the leaders of the Sudan, has so far objected to the principle, even though some potential supporters have been concerned about the political sensitivities over the area.

It should, however, be reemphasized that the proposal is premised on building a common ground, serving the mutual interests of all stakeholders, and addressing all legitimate concerns over the area. A strong case can be made that meeting the needs of the neighboring communities in the area should not be held hostage by political differences of the leaders in their respective capitals. At the same time, an equally convincing positive case can be made that stabilizing the area is a means of breaking the impasse over Abyei and therefore a way out of the quagmire facing these leaders about the future status of the area. It is my firm belief that a stabilized Abyei that belongs to both Sudan and South Sudan and whose citizens enjoy the full rights of citizenship in both countries would be enriched by such dualism and less vexed about the constructive ambiguities of their positively anomalous situation in that border area.

In this regard, it should be remembered that according to the Abyei Protocol of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), the inhabitants of Abyei are dual citizens of Sudan and South Sudan and should in principle enjoy the full rights of citizenship in both countries. Legally too, Abyei should currently be the beneficiary of shared sovereignty, where both countries have equal rights of access control. Those humanitarian and development organizations that believe that access to Abyei can only be granted by Sudan are mistaken. This is a legal situation that I personally cleared with the Office of the Legal Advisor in the United Nations in New York. And in my recent discussion of the Abyei situation with President Omer Hassan al-Bashir, he said that his vision is to have Abyei be a state whose inhabitants should be citizens of both Sudan and South Sudan, with all the rights of citizenship, including participating fully in all the institutions of government in both countries.

As the Permanent Representative of China to the United Nations said to me in response to the proposal presented to the Security Council, this is a win-win project which no one can justifiably oppose. It is my sincere hope that no political sensitivities will stand against supporting this proposal. To the

extent that such sensitivities persist, I hope that we can all cooperate to allay the legitimate fears of those concerned and bring them on board to ensure consensus support for the project in the mutual interest of all key stakeholders.

What we have produced in this proposal is a framework which can be fleshed out more and improved upon by those with additional ground-level experience and knowledge of what is practical and doable, within what time frames, and at what cost, including adding and subtracting elements to ensure its success and sustainability. Although I hope we have framed a sound approach and laid a solid foundation, the proposal can be enriched through broader participation, including conceptual and technical contributions. Most importantly, it should meet the legitimate needs, concerns and aspirations of all communities that interact in the wider Abyei Area.

Finally, I hope that as representatives of governments and organizations, you will be able to discuss and develop a strategy for engaging and persuading the governments of Sudan and South Sudan, in particular their respective leaders, to cooperate over this initiative. I believe that successful cooperation over the stabilization of the Abyei Area stands a good chance of expanding more generally and contributing toward the improvement of bilateral relations between the two countries. As we all know, Sudan and South Sudan continue to be bound by a complex myriad of internal and cross-border conflicts, including over Abyei, that urgently need to be resolved to promote good neighborliness and cooperation in the mutual interest of the two countries, their respective countries.

Recent Developments in the Abyei Situation

In July, 2018, in Khartoum, during the negotiations for the Revitalization of the 2015 Agreement to end the conflict in South Sudan, in which Sudan played a pivotal role, I was invited to participate in my personal capacity in the category of 'Eminent Persons'. I took advantage of the occasion to engage the leaders of the Sudan government at all levels and leading members of the Missiriya community, both publicly and socially. The objective of my engagement with them was two-fold: improving bilateral relations between the two countries in efforts to transform a condition of being *Bound by Conflict*, the title of my recent book, to being *Bound by Solutions*; and gaining support for the Abyei Stabilization Proposal. The reaction of government authorities and leaders of the Missiriya was remarkably positive, far beyond expectation, indicating the impact of the improving relations between the two countries.

This positive turn of events was reflected in the statement which General Mahdi Babo Nimir, the eldest son of the late Paramount Chief of the Missiriya,

who had served as the Chief of Staff of the Sudanese Army, and myself issued, and which generated considerable debate within and between the two countries. While the overall response was positive, extremists on both sides reacted negatively, underscoring the complexity and gravity of the Abyei situation and the stakes involved. The statement is hereby reproduced, followed by a plan of action and a proposed program of reconstruction and development associated with the initiative:

Statement by Concerned Missiriya and Ngok Dinka Elders.

We, the undersigned Elders from the Missiriya and the Ngok Dinka, make this statement on behalf of our respective peoples who have suffered a great deal from the devastations which the violent conflicts in the country have inflicted upon them for decades. The most affected by the crisis are the Ngok Dinka whose suffering must be brought to a speedy end. This will help foster peace and security for all our peoples in the region.

Our aspirations for the area are inspired by the history of centuries of peaceful coexistence, cordial ties, and mutually beneficial cross-cultural exchanges. We are deeply saddened that the recent conflicts between North and South Sudan have had a devastating impact on the relations between our respective peoples and generated tensions and animosities from which they have all suffered.

We fully support the proposed Stabilization program which aims at ensuring the security of the area, encouraging and supporting the return of the Ngok Dinka to their areas of origin, delivering essential services to the area, generating development activities in the critical areas of education, health, agriculture and infrastructure, and fostering cordial and cooperative relations between the Ngok Dinka and their neighbors to the north and the south.

The proposal recommends that comparable stabilization activities be undertaken in the areas of normal residence of the Missiriya. While each community should enjoy self-rule to remove any suspicions and fears emanating from recent conflicts, special arrangements should be made to oversee, regulate and harmonize their bilateral relations, especially along the seasonal migration routes of the Missiriya in search of water and grazing within the Ngok Dinka territory. The Missiriya should also benefit from social services and development activities in the area.

This stabilization program could ensure peace, security and stability in the wider border regions of both countries, which can indeed contribute to

the incremental improvement of the relations between the 'two Sudans'. The program should enable the area to continue to play its historic role as a bridge, which the Abyei Protocol strongly reaffirms.

We call on our governments of Sudan and South Sudan to fully support this proposal and contribute effectively toward its speedy implementation in collaboration with the international donor community.

From the Missiriya
Gen. Mahdi Babo Nimir

From the Ngok Dinka
Dr. Francis Mading Deng
Khartoum,
July 14, 2018

Abyei Stabilization Action Plan

To implement the joint statement signed by us as concerned Missiriya and Ngok Dinka elders on the interim stabilization of the situation in Abyei, the following program of action is recommended as a confidence building measure without prejudice to the provisions of the Abyei Protocol of the CPA or any other agreements on Abyei. It must be emphasized that these are proposals for the consideration of the relevant authorities at both local and national levels in Sudan and South Sudan.

1. Agreeing on an administrative structure in Abyei comprising the existing de facto administration, with added representatives, nominated by the government of the Sudan from among the Ngok Dinka members of the National Congress Party, the precise number to be agreed upon;
2. Urging UNISFA to extend their security coverage to the areas of normal residence for the Ngok Dinka as determined by The Hague Arbitration Award;
3. Establishing a Ngok Dinka-Missiriya Leaders Forum comprising the respective paramount chiefs and an equal number of omdas (sectional chiefs) and sheikhs from both sides to manage bilateral relations and develop strategies for cooperation, especially during the seasonal migration of the Missiriya for water and pastures for their herds in the Abyei Area, with the Forum meeting twice a year with the venue alternating between Abyei and Muglad;
4. An oversight security and administrative committee to be established, building on the present AJOC structures with some adjustments, comprising equal numbers chosen by the two governments, to oversee

the functioning of the governance organs on the ground, with the aim to foster cooperative relations between the respective security and administrative institutions of the two communities;

5. As the inhabitants of Abyei are entitled to dual citizenship of Sudan and South Sudan, these institutions shall report, and be accountable to, the specialized authorities of the two governments;
6. The two communities undertake to solicit financial support from donors and urge the government of the Sudan to pay the two percent of the oil revenues to which the Ngok Dinka community is entitled as stipulated by the Abyei Protocol, bearing in mind that the Missiriya are receiving their stipulated two percent; they are also called upon to contribute to the provision of social services and development activities in accordance with their shared sovereignty over the area;
7. By the same token of the area's dual nationality, in the implementation of the stabilization project activities, contractors will be welcome from both Sudan and South Sudan without discrimination.

To conclude, for centuries, Abyei has played a bridging role between the North and South Sudan from which the inhabitants have both suffered and gained. Despite the bitterness and animosity of recent history, the current situation calls for thinking creatively to explore win-win solutions that can meet the aspirations of both communities and restore their erstwhile historical peaceful coexistence and cooperation. This should turn the crises in their area into opportunities for developing peaceful, secure, stable and prosperous communities in the region. It could also contribute to improving bilateral relations between the two Sudans.

Khartoum, July 20, 2018

Reconstructing Abyei: Fixing a Broken Bridge

The joint statement by the Concerned Missiriya-Ngok Dinka Elders provided a broad framework for an Abyei Stabilization Agenda aimed at establishing effective and comprehensive security guarantees to facilitate the people's return to their home areas, accompanied by the delivery of essential services, generation of development activities and consolidation of peaceful coexistence and cooperation with the neighboring communities to the south and north, especially the Missiriya.

The second document, the Abyei Stabilization Action Plan, outlined principles for the practical implementation of the Stabilization Agenda, elaborating on the required administrative structures, inter-communal

arrangements for ensuring peaceful coexistence and cooperation, generating resources for humanitarian assistance and sociology-economic development, and undertaking a campaign to sensitize the communities to the Stabilization Initiative.

The present document aims at identifying specific actions that need to be taken to restore confidence within and among the neighboring communities and between them and the governments of their respective countries, Sudan and South Sudan, of which they are dual citizens. The focus should be on priorities to meet the urgent humanitarian and development needs of the area.

The overriding guiding principle in this practical action plan is to break down the barriers of bitterness and mistrust caused by prolonged conflict and animosity and to build confidence on the basis of shared objectives and mutual interest in peace, security, stability and development for all the communities in the region.

The objective outlined above can best be achieved by implementing the plan in two phases: confidence building and sustainable development.

Confidence Building Phase

This phase, which preferably needs to be completed by the end of 2019, focuses on four critical areas: realization of peaceful coexistence, establishment of security guarantees, return of Ngok Dinka to their areas of residence, and provision of basic services and infrastructure.

I. Peaceful Coexistence

To build a culture of peaceful coexistence between the Missiriya and Ngok Dinka, it is necessary to put forth a comprehensive plan of action to inculcate the spirit of cordial coexistence between the two communities at the grassroots level. The following measures that need to be undertaken and sustained should inform part of the plan:

- The two governments of Sudan and South Sudan to recognize and support the ongoing peace and reconciliation initiative being undertaken jointly by Ngok Dinka and the Missiriya.
- Soliciting regional and international assistance to support the project of peace and reconciliation between the two communities.
- Supporting inter-communal interaction and cooperation by fostering and expanding joint markets and trade routes.

- Establishment of joint Traditional Councils to oversee all activities necessary for bonding the communities in peace and harmony.
- Helping Chiefs and Elders of both communities undertake, on a regular basis, joint missions in their respective spheres of influence to deliver the message of peace and reconciliation.

2. Security Guarantees

A critical component of this entire endeavor is the overriding need for security and peace in Abyei. Having a secured environment is not only essential for Ngok Dinka, it is also imperative for the Missiriya during their seasonal movement to the area. To that end, the following need to be undertaken:

- Leaders of both communities, the Missiriya and Ngok Dinka, must appreciate their responsibilities and work diligently among their people in order to help establish and guarantee a secure environment for all. Those responsibilities necessarily should include reigning in rogue elements within their communities that may be tempted, for whatever reasons, to destabilize the established security arrangements.
- Governments of South Sudan and Sudan to cooperate and work jointly in encouraging the local communities and the UN forces in Abyei to undertake measures that provide security for all in the area.
- The two governments of Sudan and South Sudan as well as the international community to financially support the security measures being undertaken by the local communities' leadership and by the UN forces.

3. The Return

As a consequence of unrelenting insecurity in Abyei, particularly the devastating incidents of 2008 and 2011, Ngok Dinka have found themselves forced to flee their areas in droves. We, therefore, cannot restore normalcy to the area without assisting those people who want to return to go back to their localities. To achieve that objective, the following course of action is necessary:

- Creating mechanisms in Sudan and South Sudan to identify and transport individuals with the intention of return. The two governments and the international donor community to financially help in that regard.

- Provision of all requirements necessary for ensuring a decent start for the returnees in their respective localities. The role of the international donor community here is pivotal.

4. Basic Services and Infrastructure

A critical aspect of this plan is the provision of basic services and the reconstruction of the physical structures destroyed by years of unrest and war, specifically medical and educational facilities and other public utilities. Items requiring action are listed below:

- The impressive Abyei Hospital that was built by the government of Sudan and later renovated by IOM is now in dire need of renovation, equipment, essential personnel, and medicine. Also, there is a need to establish health centers for people in their respective areas of residence. Assisting in providing these is certain to have an immediate positive humanitarian and development impact for all communities in the region.
- Construction of internal and inter-communal roads to facilitate movement within and between the neighboring communities is also an urgent priority.
- Construction of other infrastructural utilities, such as information systems, youth cultural center, and communication network that could be used for positive exchange of ideas and culture between the communities.
- Building a large modern Chiefs' Court and a conference center that can be used for the periodic inter-communal meetings of chiefs and leaders from both Sudan and South Sudan to discuss issues of mutual concern and benefit.
- Construction of vocational training centers to be used for training youth on a number of disciplines, specially educating them on the best practices for farming and animal husbandry.
- Construction and renovation of schools as well as equipping them with the necessary requirements and well-trained teachers.
- Renovation and/or construction of water reservoirs and installations for the provision of clean water.
- All of the infrastructural requirements listed above, except the first item relating to Abyei Hospital, can be twinned on both sides, in the Missiriya and the Ngok Dinka areas.

Sustainable Development Phase

This phase provides a plan for building major projects that are transformational and could potentially change the way of life as we know it. These projects, which will be worked out by people of expertise as soon as this stabilization plan has been adopted, focus on three things: constructing paved roads linking Abyei with Al Mujled and Wau; implementing large agricultural projects and other development projects with the intention of turning Abyei into a hub for economic activity and cooperation between the two countries; and implementing great economic projects for the Missiriya to help them lead a more modern lifestyle, thereby forgoing having to deal with the perils of moving back and forth in surge of grazing land and water.

Most importantly, although the Stabilization Project has been well received by international donors, for them to invest materially, they would need assurance that the project enjoys the full support of the two governments. While this support has already been conveyed to them, the best way to demonstrate this support is for the governments themselves to invest in the reconstruction of the area in all fields, including physical infrastructure, education, health, agriculture, and livestock. Besides, whatever contribution foreign donors can make, it is bound to be relatively minor, and mostly concentrated in areas aimed at meeting humanitarian needs. The role of the government will therefore remain pivotal.

These projects will of course be costly, but seen in the wider context and the ambitious goal of promoting peace, reconciliation, and cooperation among the neighboring communities on the borders of the two countries, with implications for enhancing bilateral relations between them, it is an investment very much worth making.

It is in this context that making available the stipulated two percent that is due to the Ngok Dinka community is a high priority. The mechanism for delivery and credible and accountable spending can be modeled after that of the Missiriya, who have been receiving their percentage and dispersing it through a trust fund. If this payment is made to cover the arrears due to the area, and if the money is well spent on projects of vital interest to the people, the reconstruction of the broken bridge between Sudan and South Sudan can be expeditiously accomplished.

Finally, throughout the process of implementing this proposed Stabilization Agenda, it will be critical for the two countries, Sudan and South Sudan, to maintain close contact and information sharing to foster confidence and cooperation in discharging their joint sovereignty responsibility over the area.

Common Words

A Vision Still to be Realized

Daniel Jok Mading Deng

Dialogue was our household religion

Our home was infused with dialogue for better and sometimes for worse. My father holds a whole-hearted belief in talking things out; it was the closest thing to his religion. As such, our greatest religious ceremony was during dinner, when he'd ask one of his four boys to assume the honor of chairing that night's dialogue. It didn't matter about what, as long as it resulted in a respectful exchange of ideas towards some higher truth. So, we dialogued and dialogued and dialogued. In the process, as we grew up, he instilled within us a tradition that extended back into our ancestral line.

My Mother's family is German-American. Whereas Father was born in a village called Noong north of Abyei Town, Mother was born in Mobile, Alabama, and was raised in Brooklyn, New York. My maternal side is more reserved when discussing personal matters. Whereas Father liked to say, "What is not said divides," my mom's side probably felt, "Fools are known by too many words." Our grandfather often equated discussing with "Angels dancing on needle heads." Perhaps a happy balance was what we sought as we experimented with different forms of dialogue in our Washington DC house during the 80s and 90s, which was the period of my adolescence, the rites of passage from boyhood to manhood.

I was not surprised that my father beckoned to the call of the South Sudan National Dialogue in December 2016 when asked to do so by the President of the Republic of South Sudan, His Excellency Salva Kiir Mayardit; after all, dialogue was a vocation in which he excelled. He had honed his skills in three cabinets of the United Nations, serving first for Boutros Boutros Ghani, then Kofi Annan, and finally Ban ki-Moon. For each assignment, he talked things out with heads of state and cabinet ministers, even around their responsibility in cases of forced displacement and genocide. Before that, he had done so as a diplomat, representing the former united Sudan in key posts in Europe and the Americas.

The Concept Note of the President on National Dialogue laid out a broad-based and inclusive process that would cascade from the bottom up in a well-choreographed panorama of local dialogues. According to the Concept Note and associated Establishment Order, a Steering Committee would capture the threads of thought that would stitch the country back together. The process would then crescendo in a great national dialogue. I had a privileged access into the initial planning within the presidency and knew that the dialogue was a real effort to address the multiple levels of interconnected conflicts in South Sudan. I was, therefore, quite confident that my father had made the right decision.

As I watched my Father rise to the occasion of this weighty mandate, I was excited by the prospects it held. What energy could be harnessed through all those ideas bubbling up from across the country and fused into a single word, backed by the people and endorsed by the international community? How poignant would that word be when put in writing? Like the original word that became flesh, this word too might have extraordinary power to impose itself upon creation. Such a word might just be the magic bullet to deliver South Sudan from the beast called war and his promiscuous concubine called graft!

With my avenues into the presidency, I also knew that this was a genuine commitment on the part of South Sudan's poorly understood Chief Executive and Commander-in-Chief, and he was being honest when he told us all in his public address that the National Dialogue was neither a "net" nor a "bait" on a "hook" to catch opponents, but a free space for the state to talk things out with society.

It did, however, occur to me that dialogue is a sword with two sides, and can cut to heal or cut to kill. In its deep sense, the Latin word *logos* carries a spiritual connotation. Possessors of an open heart can tap its power to become more complete as their discrete words fuse with others to become sentences, paragraphs and ultimately complex narratives that constitute new (his)stories. But I must admit that despite our religious zeal for dialogue, in our Washington home, we often missed that mark. Then our dialogues merely fueled arguments,

where one brother, with a point to prove, sparred with another, defeating any chance at a greater narrative. The would-be dialogue then became a war of words, little more than a grand waste of time, without the indispensable quality of listening, as one side tried stubbornly to persuade the other. On an incessant treadmill of words, we would get nowhere, like the race of a trapped rat.

So, what would this great “logos” of National Dialogue be like in practice for South Sudan? I know people are ready to talk, but are we ready to listen?

From the beginning, some leaders disagreed. But no problem, I thought, true dialogue finds harmony in different perspectives as it stitches many smaller pieces into something more complete. Later though it began to look as though the positions of the leaders were fundamentally incompatible. While the President’s Concept Note and my father’s approach reflected African consensus-building, another confrontational approach surfaced that was more like a political debate to settle old vendettas. My concern was that the dialogue would be used as a platform for opposition politics. That, I thought, was certainly not the purpose of the National Dialogue. I rather saw it rooted in a thousand small circles under trees in villages where people start by talking things out in open courts for all to see and hear.

Over the next six months, the Steering Committee crafted a broad-based strategy with sub-committees to capture popular opinions. While these might not get right down to the level of open courts under trees, they would at least go to the people. Their idea was to then harmonize and synthesize those community-level discussions into a final end product that would be ratified by the legislature and passed to the executive. Every day in Freedom Hall, seasoned delegates would talk straight without intimidation or restraints. The president was keeping his word to stay out of the dialogue. All seemed in line with the basic principles of the Concept Note. Meanwhile, my father was expending political capital to give momentum to the National Dialogue in the face of the detractors. Among them, the international community as a whole was perhaps the most skeptical, but also respectful of the National Dialogue’s leadership, including my father. Once the local dialogues began, I thought, the international community would understand their power, shed their skepticism, and support the great crescendo of dialogue.

The rapporteur left Juba and went to England for months as the dialogue was rising. He later returned with what might be described as his own manifesto in hand. With the shrewdness of an experienced political operator, he first cleared it with the president and one of the well-respected co-chairs, and then presented it to the Steering Committee for adoption, having also ensured the endorsement of the other Co-Chairman and Deputy Co-Chairman. Controversial as the report was, the support from the top carried the day. Within a blink of an

eye, and with little discussion, the document, reflecting his well-known political stance against the SPLM/A, was adopted as Document Number One of the National Dialogue. It articulated the widely shared chronicle of failures and grievances that went to the core of the quest for reforms.

Seeds of Revolution

It's true that I was born and raised primarily in Washington DC. However, I spent my early years in Khartoum while my father was Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, having earlier served as Ambassador to the Scandinavian countries and the United States. During that time, Sudan was experiencing peace. However, that peace had begun to fall apart as the entire South began its mobilization against the North for failure to honor the terms of the 1972 Addis Ababa Accord. Our Khartoum home became a base for much dialogue. Then, Father's faith in the moral vision of the regime began to wane. He wanted to leave the government politely but was persuaded by the president to accept the post of Ambassador to Canada, with his ministerial position. The President even suggested that the posting would give my father the opportunity to combine his diplomatic assignment with continuing to write books, which he did.

Certainly, some of those who congregated in our home were critical of the government and a threat to the establishment. They had seeds of revolution already planted in their hearts. I know because they were my family members who instilled in me at an early age a radicalism grounded in a strong sense of justice. I was perhaps only four years old when a prominent northern Sudanese who was visiting my father asked me at our Khartoum home, "My boy, what do you want to be when you grow up?" My elder brother had just responded as a responsible child should in Sudan, "I want to be a minister." He was rewarded with a smile and a head rub. My answer was met with a look of shock and probably disgust. "I want to be a fighter when I grow up so I can kill the Arabs the way they are killing my people." In my honesty, I expressed what my uncles had instilled in me, the seeds of revolution.

So, no wonder we were soon on a diplomatic posting far removed from the brewing discontents in Sudan. While my father continued to serve his government in Canada, his brothers were plotting their revolution back home. Their activities were not unknown to the authorities and in an extreme move by the security forces, many of them, along with other elites of the Ngok Dinka of Abyei, were arrested en masse. That caused us to return to Sudan where my father proceeded to talk things out with the authorities over the next six months, until he finally succeeded in negotiating the release of his brothers and tribesmen. We lost months of school as a result, which we had to work hard to

remedy. Not surprisingly, many of my father's closest brothers left Khartoum, each in his own way, to join the very movement they had been arrested for supporting. Eventually, my father left the government because his remaining would have been a dangerous conflict of interest. We returned to the United States, where I proceeded to become a teenager concerned more with fitting in to my immediate environment than following the revolution back home; however, one thing is for certain, our home, whether in New York or DC, was an SPLM/A home, and to us our uncles were simply freedom fighters, the best of men bestowed with a cause beyond reproach. They were men of justice and we advocated for their cause again and again.

When my deaf uncle Arop Deng Majok was killed in his fields in Abyei by the Missiriya militia because he could not hear them coming as he cultivated, and news of more killings of our people reached us, I told my father I wanted to join the SPLA and revenge the killing of our relatives. I remembered my deaf uncle from Khartoum and so his death was particularly painful. My father told me, "Son, there are different ways of fighting. There is the spear and there is the pen. Some fight with the spear and some fight with the pen." By that he meant, I should develop myself through education and then use my talents in the future to make my contribution felt as I would later see fit. Fortunately, I was able to get an education and through it, I returned to Africa in 1998, not to the Sudan, but rather to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where I began my career as an agent for development and also experienced war directly for the first time. It was not, however, until March 17, 2001, that I first stepped foot in my ancestral homeland of Abyei. Since that time, I've had the pleasure of working with some of those uncles whom I knew as freedom fighters, but hadn't seen since my early days in Khartoum.

But before I get to some of those experiences, I'd like to return to the issue of the National Dialogue which at the moment sits at the crossroads of this country's future.

Skinning the Cat

Given his faith in dialogue, my father was taken by surprise when the leadership adopted the first National Dialogue Document. Having been authored by the rapporteur and largely reflected his well-known views on the political situation in the country, he thought that it should have been taken note of as one of the resources for consideration of the Steering Committee. Once adopted, however, he decided to use the document as an articulation of the failures that need to be addressed by the National Dialogue.

I had encouraged him early to document his own ideas on the National Dialogue and publish them separately. That way, no matter which direction the dialogue would later go, he would have made his own principles clear. As long as people could independently confirm what he stood for and was trying to achieve, then he could not be wrongly judged. Moreover, it would also give people a chance to think for themselves what type of dialogue they wanted their nation to pursue. He had agreed and produced a small book, published independently in his own name, called *South Sudan National Dialogue: Conceptual Reflections*, later revised, updated and reissued under the title, *Reflections on South Sudan National Dialogue*, in which he provided a theoretical framework for understanding dialogue, the progress of the National Dialogue process thus far, its complementarity with the revitalization of the 2015 peace agreement, and a roadmap for the National Dialogue in light of the President's Concept Note.

I knew my father was a "strategic optimist," a term he often employed. I decided to engage him on a constructive note. "There are many ways to skin a cat," I said. "You saw the path towards transformation through a circuitous dialogue that went down to the ground in order to come back up again. But maybe history has a more direct path in mind to accomplish it." Perhaps Document Number One was an important injection of reality to keep this dialogue from becoming a lengthy detour; maybe, for all the controversy around the document, it was laying a fundamental truth bare that everyone knows, but most are scared to say in the capital city, namely that the ruling party, the SPLM, had failed and was responsible for the plight of the country. And beyond that, maybe the report was also right, whether as an outcome of dialogue or not, that the SPLM was now, "too deformed to be reformed," to borrow from the characterization that the late Dr. John Garang, as head of the same SPLM, ironically had used to characterize the National Congress Party (NCP).

So, I advised my father to continue his engagement, but to focus on his own contribution to the Dialogue. If Document No. One is correct, that the SPLM/A had failed, it is, at least in my humble opinion, incorrect in its characterization of that failure. And without a correct historical understanding, we're lost, because as it is said, "if you don't know where you're coming from, you can't know where you're going to."

One of the main contentions of Document No. One is that the vision of a New Sudan towards which the SPLM manifesto was directed was the initial sin of the movement, the reason for its failure, and the cause of all South Sudan's problems. The missing or misrepresented history of the New Sudan Vision is the greatest omission the document makes.

I'd like to be specific in asserting three points that I intend to justify: First, the SPLM did have a comprehensive vision for building the country, whether

united or separated; second, that vision is the same one we need to resurrect now; and third, the reason for the SPLM having lost that vision was largely because it was infiltrated by hostile external elements whose main aim was to destroy it from within. The fact of that destruction is self-evident, although the historical process by which the infiltration took place is probably obscure to most, and is most certainly open to different perspectives. In my opinion, while the structures and institutions of the SPLM may or may not be too deformed to reform, the original guiding vision of the New Sudan is still intact, but needs to be re-awakened, if not re-branded.

Arise 'o Slumbering Giant

What better way to awaken a vision than through dialogue? Let's start where we should – the SPLM vision of building the South Sudan. In 2004, the SPLM Economic Commission and the SPLM Secretariat for Animal and Agricultural Resources (SAAR) produced a timely document called Strategic Framework for War to Peace Transition. If South Sudan had followed this framework, there would be no war today and the country would be booming socio-culturally, politically and economically. It would be well into the process of creating a coherent and vertically integrated political economy from local through national-regional levels and beyond. It was an elaboration of the New Sudan vision and although it was brief and to the point, it left no stone unturned.

The astute thinking all came from the minds of SPLM cadres – freedom fighters, whom one would have thought would have then been empowered to implement that strategy upon the success of their movement. Most of them did have a chance as they were given posts in the first government(s) but are out of government today, fueling other institutions with their erudition, and in some instances just being underutilized. The most important elements of the Strategic Framework are conveniently summed up in just a few slogans.

The first slogan is all-embracing: "We shall take towns to the people." The idea was that instead of creating a system of wealth concentration in Juba, so that people from rural areas would flock there for jobs to find none and end up in slums, the government would build the rural economy. This was a simple policy with history-changing implications. It was a direct calculated policy response to the fundamental problem of the Sudan as defined by the SPLM, which was the core-periphery relationship whereby the political elites in the town preyed upon the marginalized rural poor.

The second slogan was the "How," to respond to the "What" of taking towns to people: "We will use oil revenue to fuel the engine of agriculture for generating integrated rural development." There is no need here to detail the

evidence of the Dutch Disease, Resource Curse, or Paradox of Plenty, as South Sudan has become their foster child. However, what is important is that by abandoning that simple slogan for the management of oil revenues, South Sudan (and the SPLM) destroyed themselves.

The third slogan was expressed by the SPLM Chairman when he stipulated 'roads, roads, roads' as a priority in the development program. Roads would not only help the physical linkage and unity of the nation; they would also provide the network for marketing the produce of agricultural productivity.

The fourth slogan is more about identity than anything else, "We are all children of Kush." Now, with tribalism tearing the country at its seams, how short is our historical memory if all we can identify with are names given to us by colonizers – Dinka, Nuer, Shilluk, Equatorians and the like? What loss is there to the soul of a nation when the contributions of our ancestors from Biblical times are lost in the consciousness of the living, who, for all intents and purposes, appear now as a people without history? And how did European countries build national identities, if not by stretching their memory back to an embracing time where national roots became inclusive, in such myths as Romulus and Remus? By seeking to rebuild our national identity on the heritage of ancient Kush, the SPLM had laid a remarkably powerful framework for managing and unifying national diversity. This too was abandoned as politicians saw it fit to instead use the so-called tribes as instruments of personal gain.

In the area of technology, the Framework called for "leapfrogging obsolete stages of technological development," in areas of IT, satellite, internet, solar, wind and a host of other technologies that could bring the basic amenities of modern town life toward which rural people flock, right to the remotest villages at low cost. Upon that backbone, the Framework envisioned a network of Village Savings and Loans to become the bedrock of a people-oriented finance sector. Politically, the Framework called for "decentralization through incremental modernization of traditional administration and customary law." Instead, we have militarized local governments by appointing SPLA commanders as commissioners competing with the chiefs for local legitimacy, replacing indigenous wisdom of leadership with deference of force, in an environment of continually shifting political boundaries and administrative centers that amount to chaos rather than order at a local level.

So, to the architects of the promulgation of the First National Dialogue Document, both the leadership and the secretariat, I ask "Why did you not credibly reflect the SPLM Vision?" The substance of the New Sudan was in that vision, and it is as relevant to South Sudan today as it was to the whole Sudan yesterday. In fact, the New Sudan vision was a brilliant formulation that may alternatively be called anything, "i.e. New South Sudan vision," or "a smart

way to run the country,” or by any other reformulation. Regardless of what wine skin you choose and how you brand it, the quality of the wine is the liquid within. Trying to erase the legitimacy of the New Sudan Vision from the history of the long struggle and casting today’s problems backward through time upon the shoulders of the founders of the movement and the freedom fighters they led does our country a great disservice. Rather, we should honestly reconstruct those elements of the vision that we lost, and recommit, through our political institutions, to that vision. Whether it is some form of resuscitated party structure, with a new name but the same familiar faces, or whether the party that delivered independence chooses to break up into a multi-party system is important, but less important than the integrity of the Vision towards which the country is organized. We cannot even rule out a system of loosely aligned tribal kingships, chiefdoms or differently labelled entities, within a military, administrative, and diplomatic compact rooted in community-based systems of service delivery. Such was the system employed by the British, who, with a lean central administration consisting of just a handful of bureaucrats, were able to administer the vast country of nearly a million square miles. What I’d like to suggest instead as most important is that whatever system of governance we choose, it should pursue in earnest a genuine vision of socio-cultural, political and economic development based in a coherent and persuasive liberation ideology. As the old adage goes, “There are many ways to skin a cat.”

Now, the more difficult question and one which isn’t easily answerable in a strategic document is “Why did the SPLM lose sight of its Vision?” To say, “because the visionary died in a helicopter crash” is not convincing, because as can be seen in the Strategic Framework for War to Peace Transition, he left behind a vision and cadres to pursue it, including in the person of the sitting president who himself is a hero of the struggle and its last surviving founding member. In an attempt to answer the question, I will only dip my toes in the water, simply because it might be too hot, “The SPLM was invaded by infiltrators, some internal, and some external, with the objective of destroying it from the outside and from within...” For those of us who watched from the sidelines, we can identify some of these architects of its destruction. In fact, most people probably know them well, as our politicians are the only South Sudanese celebrities we seem to have. One thing to note about these elements is that they remained sober as some of the cadres within the SPLM seemed to become drunk with their success (and wealth), lavishly consuming the praise that comes with power, and the oil revenues that came with their control of the State – whether as ministers, parliamentarians or governors. The infiltrators, however, did not have time for such things because they were still in a struggle, which I believe was simply to destroy the SPLM. They succeeded tremendously

in this respect, and the National Dialogue Document No. One is perhaps a crowning glory to their efforts. Unfortunately, they may not have realized that by destroying the SPLM, they would destroy the opportunity of another generation – that of their children – to experience the fruits of nationhood and legitimate sovereignty.

Where Are We left?

We remain naively proud, but not genuinely strong, for our strength has whittled away with our divisions, which we cling to with religious zeal. That in unity there is power is now no more than a cliché, but its truth remains as potent as ever. Let us wake from our sleep and slumber and tell the politicians that we are not stupid. Unless they can resurrect the vision of the New Sudan within the South Sudan and perhaps articulate it on social, cultural, political, economic and historical bases that chart a way to the South Sudan we want, they should remain more modestly silent, and let more honest voices speak out. In those voices, some of our women and also of our youth, too often silenced in this harsh country of AKs and Big Men, might be heard the voices of progress. The National Dialogue has yet to reach these voices but it still has a chance to do so.

Humanizing the Ideals

To me, the individuals whose stories are told in this book personify the ideals of a New Sudan. They are all from Abyei, but each in his own way is a Pan Africanist. However, if it were not for their revolutionary agenda, they would probably more readily identify as universal citizens, for in them are values that extend beyond political borders and national identities. Yet, they each have an unfinished business of liberation that ties them in the first instance to lands and clans, nations and states. I am honored to know each of them personally and to have embarked with each of them on various exercises of liberation.

Meeting the Challenge: the Ngok of Abyei People's Dialogue, June 2003

Most of us were together in 2003, when from June 2nd to June 7th we embarked upon the Ngok of Abyei People's Dialogue in Agok. It was at this historic conference that the Ngok Dinka of Abyei decided that the SPLM would be its only representative in negotiations with the government of Sudan. I was part of the organizing committee, which also included Kuol Deim Kuol, Deng Mading

Mijak, and Deng Aar. Shortly before the conference, we had still not received the funding that the USAID had promised for the conference. The conference had been planned based on a budget and it was quite clear that without the funding we were at serious risk of failure. This led to a heated debate within the committee. Deng Aar was of the opinion that we should cancel and Deng Mading was of the opinion that we should persevere. As he put it, "I live by challenge." The ultimate decision was to be made by the chairman, Kuol Deim. I still remember his quiet composure as he listened attentively to the debate before concluding, "Let us meet the challenge."

This is not the time to reflect deeply on the significance of that conference; however, all who were there recognize it as a historic accomplishment of the Ngok Dinka of Abyei, similar to the popular referendum some ten years later, in which I also participated, when 60,000 + Ngok self-organized to express their virtually unanimous aspiration to return to the South. The significance was particularly in the leadership Kuol Deim demonstrated at that time. The conference launched the Recovery to Development Roadmap, which a year later concluded with the Abyei Area Strategic Action Plan (AASAP). This remarkable document, with its nine priority sectors, spelled out in great detail exactly how the Ngok of Abyei would spend whatever oil revenues accrued to them, and also envisioned how those "economic rents" would leverage the cooperation of the international community. It is in a disciplined community-based plan that the vision of a New Sudan must take root, and it is the absence of such a plan that enabled the reckless public expenditures in the independent South Sudan. While Abyei's revenues were not forthcoming, it is of utmost importance that the community not abandon this plan, but rather should relaunch it as a living document through which public funds, including the oil revenues that have still to be remitted to the Ngok Dinka as per the agreement, should be processed and invested. Without that moment of decision by Kuol Deim, the Abyei Recovery to Development Roadmap would not have been produced, and the Ngok would have been denied this great resource for their future. When Tony Blair told Deng Alor that leadership rests in vision and decision, it was men like Kuol Deim whom he described.

Abyei Diaspora Conference of July 2004

After the Agok Conference, I soon found myself in Washington DC where I was charged with organizing the Abyei Diaspora Conference to inform the diaspora about the decisions taken in Abyei. My father had raised the needed funds from the U.S. State Department, Norway, and the Swiss government. The Conference brought together 1000 people in Phoenix, Arizona. To have

so many South Sudanese descend on the city was a remarkable experience for its residents. A taxi cab driver from Phoenix admitted to me how the whole valley had been abuzz with expectations, and some people were initially scared of the idea of so many Africans coming to Phoenix. But, when the South Sudanese arrived and convened the conference in one of the city's premiere hotels, the taxi driver was moved by their grace and dignity. Surely, all were on superb behavior and immaculately dressed, for just as this conference was to discuss the political future of the area and the challenges ahead, it was also a big reunion. To me, the Abyei Diaspora Conference demonstrated the power of the diaspora, when properly organized, to participate in the area's recovery and development. Also, it was clearly a national event for South Sudanese and many of the key participants were from other areas of South Sudan.

The Coup at the National Lost Boys Organization, August 2004

In a serendipitous coincidence, I also found myself in the driver's seat of a National Lost Boys and Girls Conference, which was to take place in Phoenix, Arizona the following week. A Hollywood producer had invited my father to a "meeting of the Lost Boys leadership" in Kansas City; evidently, those leaders had said they needed an elder present, and proposed my father. As he was unable to go, he sent me as his representative. What I found was about 15 lost boys (including two girls), from the same number of American states, who had been called together at the behest of a large Hollywood Production Company called Outlaw Production which had produced Blockbusters including Denzel Washington's *Training Day*. Their intention was to make a movie called the *Lost Boys*, and they wanted this leadership group to accept \$50,000 to sign away the rights to their story. The problem was that this group didn't consider themselves to be representative leaders and were actually quite concerned that they would be accused by their peers should they enter into any form of a deal in the name of the "Lost Boys." So, the room was abuzz with confusion.

The Lost Boys asked the company representative and other "whites" to leave, and they sought my opinion on what they should do. I told them that Hollywood was powerful and if a movie was to be made about their experience, it was significant for two reasons – first, it would raise money which could be reinvested in schools back in South Sudan, and second, it could tell the definitive story of the South Sudanese struggle. I suggested that they form not a leadership council as Outlaw wanted for ease of contracting, but rather

a board of directors of a foundation that could get a cut of the royalties from the movie and have the right to edit whatever script was produced. They accepted, and added that the only way to form such a board was to have a general conference of all the Lost Boys, which Outlaw Production would have to facilitate. Otherwise, how could the directors be elected by the general assembly? They told me to deliver the message, which I did. Before I knew it, I was part of an organizing committee working with Outlaw Production on the National Lost Boys and Girls Organization, launching a conference scheduled for Phoenix Arizona. Amazingly, they chose to do it on the same day we had set for our Abyei Diaspora Conference, and in the same city. This was serendipity in action, since no one there had any idea about the Abyei conference.

During the preparation of the Lost Boys conference, I learned how serious the issue of regional representation was for our people in South Sudan. The organizing committee was mostly comprised of Bor Dinka simply because they as individuals had stepped forward and taken the initiative. They were exceptional people who showed remarkable commitment to the task. However, the fact that they were not representative of the whole country immediately triggered an underground movement among the Lost Boys against what they were doing. I got wind that there was a conspiracy brewing with the intention to destroy the conference, but I ignored it, thinking that as long as the outcome was good, people would participate without concern for the tribal representation on the steering committee. I was wrong. Little did I know that the grievances against "Bor domination" were not new, but had been seeded among the Lost Boys from the time they were in the refugee camps in Ethiopia and Kenya.

When asked by the Producer whom I thought should be the key note speaker, I told them, "Dr. John Garang." I was worried about the conspiracy to undermine the conference, and knew Dr. Garang was the one they would all respect and who could give them the orientation they needed to make the foundation function. The producer had different ideas – he wanted the comedian Chris Tucker to address the Lost Boys, and rather than a non-profit, he wanted a leadership council with whom they could sign a deal, cut a check, and be done with it. Clearly, he was thinking about marketing and underestimating the swarm of bees he had around him in the form of the Lost Boys and Girls.

However, before we get to that point, another issue came up. I noted that some of the Lost Boys, and particularly one individual, were pitching a story to Outlaw Production that the SPLA story was primarily about child abduction and conscription into war. As I did my due diligence, I came to find that this narrative was being pushed by an individual for his own self-promotion as a sort of celebrity-figure within Hollywood. I thought this was wrong.

Deng Alor happened to visit the U.S. at this time. He had come to see us at our DC house. We were sitting in a car in front of the house, as I was to drive him somewhere, when I revealed to him my concern, "Uncle, a movie is being made about the Lost Boys. It will be the story that tells the world about the SPLA. However, there is someone here determined to make it a story of abduction of children as child soldiers. If that happens, the chance to inform the world about the just cause that you fought for will be lost." Deng absorbed the information calmly and told me that he understood my concern. He dismissed the idea of the SPLA abducting children and explained the history of how the movement had taken responsibility to educate and raise the children who had been displaced by war. He saw their eventual contribution to the struggle in a different light, but didn't indicate to me what he planned to do about my concern.

The conference was an incredible success with over a 1,000 Lost Boys & Girls coming from all over the U.S. The format was to allow anyone to nominate anyone else, give them a 2-minute chance to campaign in front of the plenary, and the next day elect a nine-member board by secret ballot, since all of them knew of each other anyway. This would then be the governing board of the foundation for the first term of service. The nominations went well, with 27 nominees who all accepted to compete. But that night, the conspiracy was hatched and the coup plotters sent a delegation to each candidate's room, telling all of them who were not from the Bor Dinka that there had been community meetings of Equatorians and Bahr el Ghazalians, and that the decision was that no one from those communities should compete, or else they would be ostracized. The next day, one after another, each of the 27 candidates, when called before the plenary, withdrew from the race without explanation, leaving only the nine who were from Bor (who remained unaware of what had transpired the night before). Meanwhile, the coup plotters assembled themselves in a group to storm the stage, physically take the microphone from the Master of Ceremonies, and in front of the Mayor of Phoenix and Hollywood, declare the whole exercise illegitimate.

Fortunately, Deng Alor had listened to me when I expressed my concern. He had told the Chairman, Dr. John, about the conference and without informing the organizers, the chairman sent a delegation to the conference. Among them were Deng Alor and Pagan Amum. As I saw what was happening in the conference, I quickly assembled them along with my father who had been invited as a community elder, positioned them in a side room and convinced them to summon the coup plotters. Given the stature of these leaders, the plotters had to postpone their coup and follow me to the room. The SPLM/A leaders heard the concerns of these young men long enough to thwart their

coup. And so, while we avoided the embarrassment, their plot did result in only the Bor being left on the ballot. Hence all nine members of the first Lost Boys National Organization Board of Directors were Bor. This self-fulfilling prophecy gave the plotters the leverage to later negotiate directly with Outlaw Production Company to support their bid for an additional ten seats. They used these as a block to take the chairmanship and basically kill the foundation at its birth, since none of them actually intended to build anything from within.

However, Dr. John Garang himself also came to the conference but did not attend the plenary. Instead, he set up a side hall and summoned all of the Lost Boys, whom he then proceeded to lecture for four hours amidst songs of liberation. He told them, "You are not Lost Boys. Each of you know where you come from. You are the Red Army." He then went beyond that to tell them of the 11 phases of South Sudanese history, starting with the Bible, and exactly how they related to world history as a people. He then advised them of their role in their country and the meaning of their presence in the diaspora.

Clearly, this experience exposed me to the leadership qualities of Dr. John, who loomed larger than life. However, they also showed me how Deng Alor quietly had been the trusted interlocutor, bringing to Dr. John's awareness an important development in the ongoing and multi-dimensional liberation struggle, for both men knew this group of youth called the Red Army was only hiding under the title of Lost Boys, which they would surely shed upon their eventual return home. Now, in South Sudan, no one is known as a Lost Boy but there are thousands of returnees who self-identify as Red Army.

Sadly, the owner of Outlaw Production, with whom I had developed a close friendship and who had himself become totally engrossed with the challenge of South Sudan and the Lost Boys movie, collapsed on a treadmill in a hotel from a heart attack. Although his wife tried to champion on after his death, the movie went a different direction. Meanwhile, the new board failed to build the foundation, having never really been committed to it in the first place. In this experience, I tasted our people's penchant to destroy good things. It would not, however, be my last.

It is an honor to be a driver, March 2005

The next year, I was back in DC again from South Africa, working for an international NGO and shortly upon my return, I got a call from the old friend of the SPLM, Brian De Silva. He informed me that Dr. John was coming to the U.S. on an important mission to brief members of congress and the State Department on developments relating to the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA). They didn't have a budget for a driver and wondered if I would drive the

chairman and his delegation. My immediate reaction was to wonder, “USAID has no budget for a driver?” Then I thought, “It would be my honor to drive the Chairman around DC.”

For a week, I was the driver for him along with his delegation, which included Pagan Amum and Nhial Deng. It was most interesting sitting behind the steering wheel and hearing their conversations. But what I found even more insightful was the conversation Dr. Garang had with my father. It was during that conversation that I became personally convinced that Dr. John did believe that Sudan would remain united and that he would be its president. Moreover, he also saw the Joint Integrated Units (JIUs), which were deployed along the borders and in key strategic locations, as the nuclei of a new National Army that would replace both the SPLA and SAF. His vision of a New Sudan was far beyond what most people were thinking. At one point, while driving in DC’s Federal District, he told me that he planned to allocate a 50 km stretch of road north of Juba, with an additional 50 kms extending outwards on each side, as a Garden of Eden where we would plant every type of tree in Africa. When I sat with him one-on-one to tell him about certain initiatives I was planning, he advised me to go to Abyei, establish a community center, and plant sunflower seeds. From the sale of its oil, he told me, we could fund the community center and not be dependent on donors. When I told him about a certain web-based platform that the U.S. army, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), and various police offices were using to coordinate emergency response and suggested he could adapt such an approach to coordinating humanitarian investments in South Sudan with the United Nations, he understood exactly what I meant and asked me two questions, “How do I get it and how do I use it?” Dr. John was a man with a vision for his nation, and he managed to share that vision during his lifetime. It is now for those who remember it to revive it, share it, evolve it, and implement it.

The Importance of Social Capital for Development Economics

Another person who understood Dr. John’s vision was Dr. Luka Biong, who had received his Doctorate in Economics. His research dissertation analyzed primary data on social capital in South Sudan. He determined that while exogenous conflicts create a bonding effect within communities, endogenous conflicts within groups erode social capital. He was one of the principal drafters of the Strategic Framework for War to Peace Transition, which I referred to earlier. The importance of Dr. Luka’s social capital approach is to ground

economics back in community, a theme that is clearly central to the Strategic Framework. Not only does it posit the basic administrative unit of development planning as “the person within community,” but it also recognizes that in the South Sudan context, when such a person exists within a household, that can be transformed into a “model sustainable homestead.” This concept has been most influential in my thinking as I helped UN agencies, large International NGOs, and leading donors, including USAID and JICA, to think through their own strategies. The level of thought Dr. Luka had invested in such planning was exactly what is needed to direct a ship as large as a nation towards its destiny. However, we should not have to sell such concepts to foreign agencies without first championing them ourselves as a government.

It is no wonder that Dr. Luka founded the New Sudan Center for Statistics and Evaluation, which now, as the South Sudan Statistics Bureau, is one of the best functioning institutions in the Sudan. The work that he did in building the Center for Peace and Development Studies at the University of Juba had set the university on a fast trajectory towards international recognition and partnerships. Although he was unceremoniously pushed out of the Center for organizing an important debate on federalism which offended some politicians, his contribution was having tremendous impact. Specifically, he had attracted significant donor funding to the University of Juba.

I had already been working with Dr. Luka for some time in the context of the non-governmental organization we had established called Kush Inc. It was through that NGO that we had done significant community-based work in Abyei, including supporting the Recovery to Development Roadmap, constructing boreholes, building a Resource Center, organizing conferences and distributing non-food items. It was also through that initiative that I met the late Deng Ajak who had himself also established a diaspora-based initiative called the Kush Institution during his time in the U.K. While ours was focused primarily on direct service provision to realize the ideal of “Taking Towns to People” practically on the ground, Deng Ajak’s initiative was envisioned as a policy institute, or what might be called a think tank for the New Sudan. In a remarkable display of determination, he managed to not only take this initiative from the Diaspora to South Sudan immediately upon independence, but he also introduced it as a bill in Parliament. The Kush Institution Act was passed, making this initiative a think tank established by law with the president as its patron. He had researched the Smithsonian, Brookings Institution, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, and other powerful policy making bodies in the U.S. and decided on a hybrid of all of them.

We agreed that Kush Inc. and Kush Institution would work closely together, with Kush Institution influencing policy and Kush Inc. putting it into practice.

In one of our nation's most tragic events, Deng Ajak, from Twich county, died in a plane crash in South Sudan that also took the lives of other prominent national leaders from his home area, including Dr. Justin Yac, who was Minister of Cabinet Affairs at the time, and Dominic Dim, Minister of Defense. In his commitment to the cause of South Sudan and his deep understanding of the importance of policy-making to governance, Dr. Luka Biong resurrected the Kush Institution while he was still Minister in the Office of the President, and created its organizational structure and bylaws. As I read the documents he produced, I was so excited because I saw in them the legacy that the late Deng Ajak had left behind. This was true nationalism and the continuation of the struggle; it was the way the SPLM would go from fighting a war to building a nation. Now, with Dr. Luka having been pushed far away from government by those who saw him as some type of threat, Kush Institution and the legacy of Deng Ajak remain buried, awaiting its revival. But who will revive it when great freedom fighters are chased away?

Who Will Take Towns to the People?

After speaking with Dr. John in the U.S., I started putting together certain plans for my relocation from Cape Town to South Sudan with the intention of following his advice. My core concern was to operationalize what the SPLM had stipulated, "to use oil revenue to fuel the engine of agriculture." I concluded a study and wrote a white paper in 2008 which I shared with members of the government of South Sudan. The white paper found that:

1. Government of South Sudan (GOSS) had only received a fraction of the revenue from the oil production accorded to it by the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA).
2. United States sanctions on Sudan posed a problem for South Sudan petroleum development post-2011 because as long as there was reliance on the northern infrastructure, sanctions would continue and western and other countries would shy away from GOSS.
3. So-called 'Dutch Disease' in South Sudan was restricting agriculture and infrastructure and resulting in institutions favoring rent-seeking over agro-industrial development.
4. The current constraints on the Bank of South Sudan (BOSS), fiscal management problems, and absence of collateral restricted the GOSS from accessing development finance.

5. Lack of community participation in the benefits of South Sudan's oil would create future instability, particularly if peace dividends did not reach ex-combatants and/or if benefits of oil sector development lead to perceived inequalities among groups.

My study recommended:

1. Establishing a Royalty-in-Kind Program to free the GOSS from US sanctions, allow GNU to pay outstanding arrears (without being financially crippled) and enable GOSS to leverage financing while building experience in oil sector management;
2. Using resources from Royalty-in-Kind to fund Demobilization, Disarmament and Reintegration (DDR) activities by the SPLA Directorate of Production, focused on agriculture and infrastructure for a designated period of time;
3. Developing Nilepet into a vertically integrated National Oil Company (NOC) to negotiate agreements with operators, investors, communities and the Khartoum government;
4. Establishing a trust fund to ensure that communities participate in public works that would bring towns to people (Taking Towns to People) while setting funds aside for future generations when the oil was gone;
5. Using Royalty-in-Kind to negotiate the best deals with the West (U.S./ Europe), East (China, India, Pakistan, Indonesia, Malaysia, & Russia), South (Africa) and the North (the Arab World), establishing GOSS's strategic position in the center.

When I produced this document with the above findings and recommendations, there was almost no recognition of the looming danger of what would likely occur when South Sudan actually took over the management of its oil. In fact, I found that there was very little interest in those ideas. Yet, in retrospect, I still feel that these ideas are the key to actualizing the vision of SPLM. Moreover, they were directly inspired by that vision. I was determined, however, to do more than just put ideas on paper. I would myself help to create the mechanism. After all, if others would not do it, then responsibility should fall on our own shoulders. I spent a year in Abyei in 2009 working with IOM, but seconded as an advisor to the Chief Administrator, Deng Arop, where we had organized the return of 40,000 IDPs in a major operation that involved over 200 buses and the same number of trucks, and pick-up sites in 20 cities across North Sudan. The

idea was to provide those IDPs a chance to vote in the referendum. However, while South Sudan was voting, these returnees were again being displaced, as Khartoum took the opportunity to attack the area. I returned to Juba and decided to pursue the objective of Taking-Towns-to-People through the private sector, now having had experience in the non-governmental organization, the government, and the United Nations.

In 2010, Deng Alor was the Minister of Cabinet Affairs. I and my good friend from Akobo, Kueth Duany, who had an interest in the petroleum sector, sat down and designed a plan. I used a decade of strategic planning experience to create a logical framework through which we could build a vehicle for Taking Towns to People. The idea was to create a special purpose vehicle in which the government of South Sudan would be the majority shareholder in partnership with a major western company and a major eastern company. After a year of work, we succeeded in arranging the deal. It centered on a joint venture between Nilepet, which at that time was a little-known sleeping giant that existed only on paper and had yet to engage in any business, and the world's largest petroleum trading companies – Glencore and Sinopec. The range of benefits we structured into the deal and the benefits to our government were truly remarkable – including the establishment of Petronile offices run by South Sudanese in London, Singapore, and Hong Kong. These offices would start as desks within Glencore under the mentorship of their most experienced traders with full access to their lines of credit (over \$500 billion), and would be spun off independently after five years. The deal included an alternate pipeline and establishment of a reinvestment mechanism for strategic projects, which were envisioned to include the Trust Fund to engage former combatants in agriculture and road construction.

To create such a mechanism, we relied on the understanding and support of Deng Alor who brought the Minister of Finance, Minister of Petroleum, and Minister of Cabinet Affairs on board. We traveled together with them and the Managing Director of Nilepet to the Glencore head office in London. The deal was signed and the vehicle was established. My partner, Kueth, and I invested the benefits we got from that deal in Kush Inc., the same non-profit I had been supporting for years, and through it we launched a major public relations effort in the U.S. to build support for South Sudan. One of our first efforts was to apply to the Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) to lift sanctions on South Sudan. Few at that time knew, even amongst our leaders, that although we had gained our independence from Sudan, we were still under sanctions and therefore could never trade our oil with western countries, thereby preventing us from building new strategic relations for mutual benefit. In the application, Kush Inc. argued to the U.S. State Department and the Treasury that the

exemption would allow South Sudan through Petronile to invest in a trust fund to support demobilization, disarmament and reintegration of ex-combatants into agriculture, and thereby promote peace and security. The State Department granted South Sudan a blanket exemption based on the work of Kush Inc. During this time, Dr. Luka Biong was serving as our Executive Director. This remains one of the little-known accomplishments of his continuing service to the national cause.

Petronile was ultimately undermined by certain politicians who were not part of the freedom fighters that built the movement. While participation in nation building requires everyone's contribution and should not be restricted to those who fought in the bush, it is also important to scrutinize people's motivation, particularly when they are given political power with such great consequences. Perhaps the relevant decision-makers did not understand the purpose of Petronile or its potential, or, more likely, they saw it as running counter to their own vision for the petroleum sector. What happened subsequently, from the complete shutdown of production to the wholesale looting of the treasury through the Nilepet LC facility, is evidence enough to show that while it is easy to destroy something, it is not as easy to build it. South Sudan still awaits someone who, as Deng Alor tried to do as minister, will champion worthwhile ideas that are in line with the original SPLM vision, not for his own benefit, but to continue the liberation of his people. By this I do not mean from "the Arabs," but from poverty, illiteracy, disease, and hunger.

Freedom Farms and Freedom Farmers

Perhaps of all the people I've had the pleasure of working with in South Sudan, the one who most directly pursued the ideals of John Garang's vision in the agriculture sector, is General Pieng Deng Majok who, as Deputy Chief of Staff for Administration and later for Operations, continued his wartime initiatives of trying to introduce agriculture to former combatants. General Pieng is known for his commitment to his soldiers. For him, the only way to stabilize South Sudan is to give the young warriors who fill the ranks of the army a chance to build themselves and earn wealth in the private sector. The private sector is the only space wide enough to accommodate them. If they seek their opportunity in the public sector, clientelist patronage networks are the only possible outcomes. For South Sudan, the only private sector potentially large enough to sustainably absorb these men and women is agriculture. So, I worked with General Pieng to support his pig farm in Luri by investing in it and bringing three South African farmers to organize and train the ex-combatants he targeted. We even opened a restaurant linked to the farm that would promote the concept of "From Farm-

to-Table”, where all food would be grown locally. We gave it his code name from the struggle – Omega.

Here, it is important to remember the depth of Pieng’s commitment to this ideal of agriculture as a means for supporting the soldiers. While in the field, he introduced pigs in areas under his command. He chose pigs because they required little management and were economically productive animals. While South Sudanese did not traditionally keep pigs for commercial purposes, he thought they were an appropriate way to bolster food security and incomes. Across South Sudan, where Pieng commanded forces, one can still find pigs mulling around the towns. Locally, these are known as Pieng’s pigs. So, it is not surprising that upon independence he established a modest farming initiative outside Juba town, which he called Freedom Farms. When we invested in this farm, we decided, in light of the ultimate objective of empowering the freedom fighters, to call the farmers we worked with Freedom Farmers. This concept, I believe, is very important for the future of South Sudan.

General Pieng was then switched from the army to the police, where he introduced the Police Development Corporation which tried to generate greater incomes and services for the Police. On December 15th, 2013, I was sitting with him at night discussing agriculture and DDR that would build on and expand what we had been doing in Luri with the South Africans. He was impressed with them and believed their efforts could support a more formal DDR initiative. Then in the distance, we heard some exchange of fire. In Juba, this was common enough that we did not break our line of conversation. However, the shots continued sporadically and sounded more like call-and-response than isolated bursts. Soon, General Pieng’s phone started ringing, and while he told me that it was nothing to worry about, I recognized the name of a top security person on the other side. I decided to leave him in order to return home, since the town was clearly uneasy, but his guards told me I should stay there for the night, as the streets were apparently not safe. I slept on the sofa in the living room, dozing in and out of dreamy sleep, worried by the tension in the air. In the middle of the night, one of his officers entered the house carrying his military operations uniform and ascending the steps towards his bedroom. Shortly after, I saw him descend the stairs and leave the house in full military uniform. Clearly, the situation in Juba was deteriorating.

The next day, the fighting had spread. The Chief-of-Staff, James Hoth, arrived at the house with Deng Alor, Oyai Deng, Gier Chuang, Cirino Hiteng, Chol Tong, Mijak Agot, Kosti Manibe and Madut Biar, all of whom had been accused of conspiracy in an attempted coup and were therefore detained. Pieng then took them to his house for protection. I witnessed an intense discussion between James Hoth, Chief-of-Staff, and Pieng Deng, Inspector-

General of Police, over where the most secure place to keep them during their detention would be. It was strange to witness because these were all friends and yet they were now on opposite sides of the law. Still, the two generals were most concerned with the safety of the detainees, as the situation in Juba was seriously confused by the eruption of violence. The final decision was to split them between Deng Alor's house and Pieng's. That night at Pieng's request, I entertained Gier Chuang and Cirino Hiteng, who were among the group staying at Pieng's house. They were both deeply unnerved by what was happening. Gier in particular had experienced the trauma of his house being attacked and at least one guard killed.

The next day, we received word that Juba was ablaze with soldiers not only looting houses but also carrying out executions. I was concerned for my fiancée, my brother David, and his wife Elizabeth, and the three South African farmers who were my responsibility. I took some police and a mounted pick-up truck and first went to retrieve my fiancée from her small house in the Gudele neighborhood of Juba, thinking the IGP's house would be a more secure place for her and her sister. After I dropped them there, I proceeded out again to pick up my brother, but as I entered the Thong Ping neighborhood, I heard explosive gunfire erupt from Amarat, where we had just left. My phone rang and I could hear the live bullets on the other side as my fiancée told me the house was being stormed. In fact, Riek Machar's house, with whom the IGP shared a wall, was being attacked. The tank used to blow in the gate also knocked down the wall between the houses.

That was the beginning of what would be a harrowing week for everyone in Juba; it is a tragedy that continues unabated to this day. While we eventually drove out of South Sudan to Uganda with the South Africans, I left General Pieng behind to defend Juba from the encroachment of the White Army which after only a few days was already threatening to reach Bor, the site of massacres in 1991 when a similar split had left the SPLA devastatingly divided.

When I came back to Juba in January, war had engulfed the country and Protection of Civilian (POC) sites were harboring hundreds of thousands of people who had been displaced. I watched as Gen. Pieng in his capacity of IGP developed the idea of Juba as a gun-free city, and worked to build trust between the residents and those who were seeking shelter in the POCs. As an advisor to JICA, I was determined to help them build a security sector intervention. So, I sat in on the weekly meeting at the IGP's office, chaired by Gen. Pieng himself, which he called the Police Development Committee (PDC). I saw how, through that mechanism, he was organizing the donors and other partners and creating a culture of collaboration within the police as well as between them and the international community that had never before existed. He was firmly

on his way to building a demilitarized Juba with a joint police force drawn from both sides of the conflict. Soon, however, he was removed from that position. His replacement did not pursue the collaborative model. What a loss, I thought, that a General who cared so deeply about his officers, commanded great respect among the internationals, and had the original vision of the SPLM should be rendered idle.

A Freedom Fighter with the Heart of the Developmentalist

Of all these men whose stories are detailed in this book, the one who approaches the SPLM vision from the standpoint of a technical manager is Amb. Arop Haroun. His participation in the Abyei Conference in 2003 and then the Recovery to Development Roadmap did not end with the elaboration of a static action plan, but continued as he developed initiatives and programs, some which were realized and some of which were not, and formulated them in accordance with the technical requirements of the donors. I have now been working for these agencies for 20 years in Africa. Attention to form of presentation and the technical rigor required by that form are important.

In 2013, Amb. Arop Haroun and his wife established a management institute in Juba through a partnership with an Ethiopian management institute. He carried out leadership training for top SPLM/A officials and military officers. As I toured the institute and considered the piles of fascinating books, I picked up one on service-leadership. Written in the seventies, it was an authoritative work depicting how the demise of American institutions was principally a function of the loss of the function of service-leadership in the form of the Trustee. Reading that book was one of the single-most influential factors in my understanding of how the spiritual virtue of trust functions within institutions, why the great universities, non-governmental organizations and agencies of the state have historically worked in the U.S., and how they are now going wrong. The argument of the book was that for the United States to maintain its greatness, it would need to build the service-leadership qualities of trustees at all levels. What would the impact be if such an initiative of the management training institute that Ambassador Arop and his wife had established in Juba would be used as a vehicle for building capacity of our leaders? Unfortunately, as the government committed its resources to war, such a possibility remains a challenge.

In early February, 2018, as Arop was about to leave for the United Kingdom, to which he had just been appointed Ambassador, he, and indeed the nation,

unexpectedly learned through the South Sudan Broadcasting Cooperation, on television, that he had been relieved of his duties by Presidential Decree with immediate effect. Of course, no reasons for his relief were given.

Towards Common Trust and Stabilization

These reflections on initiatives that have connected me to the gentlemen whose stories are detailed in this book have all centered on how we actualize the Vision of the New Sudan which the SPLM/A fought for, and although the scope of the exercise is limited to South Sudan given the reality of independence, the substance of the Vision can be applied anywhere. I would encourage every South Sudanese to internalize the substance of that vision and work, as the gentlemen covered in this book have done, to contribute towards its realization nationally as well as in their home areas, bomas, payams, counties and states. The Vision is national, but it must be rooted locally. Approaching the New Sudan Vision from both the bottom up and the top down is also an important method for understanding the challenge of decentralization. While we are fond of calling for a federal state or even invoking the notion of autonomy for local areas within a unitary system, what are the detailed policy objectives that those broader concepts envelope? I would argue that such substance is once again summed up in the SPLM slogans: 1) Take towns to the People!; 2) Use Oil to Fuel the Engine of Agriculture; 3) Build roads, roads, roads; 4) Leapfrog through Technology; 5) Build Model Sustainable Homesteads; 6) Build Community-Based Governance; 7) Decentralize Rural Finance; 8) Expand Social Capital building on the "Person Within Community"; and 9) Go back to Kush! These slogans are easier said than done, but the first steps should be taken under the same Vision, using whatever name suits the specific purpose.

Part Five:

Abyei in Perspective

Conclusion

Francis Mading Deng

This book has tried to address several inter-related issues. It has aimed at responding to the allegations and assertions made by Bona Malual in his latest book, *The Ngok Dinka of Abyei: Not Yet South Sudan*, which, though primarily a documentation of his conflict with leading members of the Ngok Dinka community in the SPLM/A, has had an adverse effect on the position of South Sudan and, to a lesser though also significant degree, on that of the Sudan on the issue of the status of Abyei between the two countries. The book came out at the time we were convening reconciliation talks between Bona and his Ngok adversaries and had the potential of undermining the talks. Fortunately, the Ngok leaders decided that the talks should proceed as planned and that the outcome should not be adversely affected by the book. However, they made it clear to me that they would respond to the book at an appropriate time.

Bona Malual realized that his book was bound to provoke an angry response, but hoped that his adversaries would consider the fact that it was written at a time of conflict, and while he welcomed any response to the book, he hoped that as people had now reconciled, the book should no longer be viewed with hostility. Although the angry response to the book continues to be reflected privately and in the social media by the Ngok community, especially

among the youth, this book has aimed at contributing to the dialogue with Bona constructively, without hostility or animosity.

The second objective of the book was to document the role individual members of the Ngok Dinka have played in the liberation struggle of South Sudan. Ironically, these personal stories reaffirm the identity of the Ngok Dinka as South Sudanese and therefore refute the allegation that Abyei is not fully part of South Sudan. This allegation is the essence of the sub-title of Bona Malual's book, which asserts that Abyei is not yet part of South Sudan.

Of course, what Bona means by saying that the Ngok Dinka of Abyei are 'Not Yet South Sudan' is the legal status between Sudan and South Sudan, which is still to be determined by the exercise of the referendum provided for in the Abyei Protocol of the CPA. However, to the Ngok Dinka, their ethnic and cultural affinity with South Sudan together with their tested commitment to the cause of its liberation, which they have demonstrated in the two wars, means that any ambiguity in their identification with South Sudan implies political denial that must be countered. This book does this by documenting the contributions and sacrifices made by the Ngok Dinka to the liberation of South Sudan.

Perhaps even more important than responding to Bona's book or documenting the participation of the Ngok Dinka in the liberation struggle of South Sudan, the third objective of the book is to address the critical question pertaining to the future status of Abyei between Sudan and South Sudan. The Abyei Protocol provides that this must be decided by the Ngok Dinka in a referendum, a choice that has so far been blocked by Khartoum. Although the Ngok Dinka conducted their own community referendum that overwhelmingly opted for joining South Sudan, the result of that referendum has been rejected by Sudan, ostensibly ignored by South Sudan, and legally invalidated by the international community.

This has created an impasse and a situation of virtual statelessness for the Ngok Dinka. Abyei is currently without the protection, humanitarian assistance, social services and economic development normally provided by the state. The United Nations Interim Security Force in Abyei, UNISFA, is providing a measure of protection that is much appreciated, though limited in scope. But it is an interim arrangement that gets only periodically renewed with threats of imminent termination. It is therefore not a durable option.

No solution is achievable or viable that is not agreed upon by both Sudan and South Sudan. And both cannot agree on any formula that is not in their mutual interest. While mutual interests might be served by a negotiated agreement to share such material resources as oil revenues or sources of water and grazing lands for seasonal nomadic herders, there are also intangible interests such as

identity and possessive control over land and population that are difficult to define, manage or resolve.

It was the anticipation of potential conflicts over land rights that made the leaders of the Ngok Dinka choose to remain in northern Sudan to allay the fears of the Arabs that the Ngok joining the South might restrict their access to sources of water and grazing lands. But emotional attachment to land and other benefits associated with it might even transcend these utilitarian considerations. This is why the Missiriya Arabs claim that the British found them sitting together with the Ngok Dinka on one mat as brothers and they should therefore not be separated. Babo Nimir, the late Paramount Chief of the Missiriya, used to argue that if the Ngok Dinka were to join the South, the Missiriya would choose to go with them. Of course, this was in all probability an exaggerated claim of solidarity with the Ngok Dinka that could not be justified or pursued in earnest, but it demonstrates the difficulties of intrinsic self-interested resistance to partition.

An option that may be both acceptable and objectionable to varying percentages of the Ngok Dinka is one that would build on the historic position of the area as a constructive bridge between the North and the South of the former Sudan, now divided into the two Sudans. This role is expressly recognized by the Abyei Protocol which states, 'Abyei is a bridge between the north and the South, linking the people of Sudan'. The Protocol grants the people of Abyei dual citizenship between the North and the South during the interim period, prior to the referendum that would determine their future.

In a recent discussion with President Omer Hassan al Bashir of Sudan, he suggested that Abyei be made a state whose inhabitants would be dual citizens of Sudan and South Sudan, with the right to participate fully in all the institutions of government in both countries. After a specified interim period, the citizens of Abyei would then choose from three options: to be citizens of Sudan, citizens of South Sudan, or remain dual citizens of both countries. The question has been raised as to whether this middle state would include the Missiriya Arabs. Would President al Bashir seriously want the Missiriya to be dual citizens of both Sudan and the secular South Sudan along with the Ngok Dinka? This is, of course, an intriguing question for which only President Bashir can provide the answer. Bashir's proposal will almost certainly be rejected by purists who want to hold to the letter and spirit of the Abyei Protocol. However, objectively viewed, whatever devil there might be in its details, this proposal is clearly one that would enrich the choice for the Ngok Dinka and is therefore one that is worth serious consideration.

Since the issues pertaining to the long-term status of Abyei will most likely continue to be debated for some time to come, it is urgent that the immediate

needs of the area for secure and comprehensive protection, humanitarian assistance, social services, and economic development be provided for. This would facilitate the return of the internally displaced and refugees to their areas of origin, their resettlement and reintegration into their communities, the reconstruction of their homes and cultivation of their farms, and the overall resumption of the activities of their normal sustainable livelihood. Lastly, equally important and urgent is the promotion of reconciliation and cooperative relations with their neighbors in the two Sudans, and especially with the nomadic Missiriya Arab herders who enter the area seasonally in search of water and pastures.

These urgent measures constitute the essence of the stabilization proposal presented in this book. Such stabilization could have a positive ripple effect that stands a good chance of restoring the area to its historic bridging role that could contribute to the improvement of bilateral relations between Sudan and South Sudan. It is indeed a win-win proposition that should not be objectionable to anyone concerned with the current crises in the area, the plight of the border communities of the two countries, or the need for building a better future not only in the interest of those communities but also in the mutual interest of both Sudan and South Sudan.

Postscript

Francis Mading Deng

Recently, on December 4, 2017, while in Khartoum, Bona Malual repeated the theme of his book on Abyei, *The Ngok Dinka of Abyei, Not Yet South Sudan*, in response to a question by a journalist. The portion of the audio-recorded version of his response, which was widely disseminated, emphatically states that according to the 1956 borders between the North and South, agreed to by the parties to avoid border conflict between them, Abyei falls within the Sudan.

Bona Malual goes on to state categorically that Abyei is not contested between Sudan and South Sudan and that he has never heard any leader of South Sudan or of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement and Army claiming Abyei as South Sudanese. He asserted that if there are people claiming that Abyei is part of South Sudan, they are mistaken. Bona conceded that the people of Abyei are ethnically and culturally southerners and that they have fought in the liberation wars of the South as part of their demand to join their kith and kin in the South, which he acknowledges is their right.

He then makes a passing reference to agreements over Abyei and the northern Sudanese regions of Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile that have not been implemented. The connection with these northern regions obscured the difference between the case for Abyei Referendum on remaining in the Sudan or joining South Sudan and the provisions of the agreement that give

those Sudanese regions the right to conduct popular consultations over their autonomous status within the Sudan.

Bona Malual's statement, or at least the highlighted portion, did not refer to the fact that the Abyei Protocol of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement gives the inhabitants of Abyei dual citizenship during the interim period and the fact that the Interim Constitution of South Sudan makes the people of Abyei full citizens of South Sudan.

As might be expected, Bona's statement caused a great deal of uproar among the Ngok Dinka, some of whom suspected that it might have been coordinated with the leadership of both Sudan and South Sudan, to which Bona Malual is personally close.

Once the statement came out, Bona tried to reach out to the Ngok leaders to explain how his statement had been misrepresented and distorted. He was able to reach General Pieng and Francis Mading Deng and unsuccessfully tried to reach Deng Alor. He was later able to have a working lunch with a number of Ngok Dinka leaders, including Sultan Bulabek Deng, Malony Tong, the Minister of Finance in Abyei Area Administration, Bulabek (Monylam) Deng, Hon. Ngor Ayuel, Ring Deng (Secretary General of AAA), and Francis Mading Deng. On yet another occasion, he had an equally exhaustive discussion with General Pieng Deng, Charles Biong Deng, and Francis Mading Deng.

In these meetings, Bona regretted that he had exposed himself to the press interview which gave the journalist the opportunity to select from Bona's words what the journalist himself wanted in order to promote the journalist's own objective. While he did not retract what he had said, he made it clear that his intentions had been grossly misinterpreted.

He repeated the main themes of his remarks by explaining that what he had said was that according to the 1956 borders agreed between South and North Sudan, Abyei is of course part of the North. However, the people of Abyei are ethnically and culturally part of the South, and that they rightly want to join their people of the South, especially because of the way they have been mistreated by the North. He said he also noted that the people of Abyei had fought and sacrificed their lives alongside the people of the South in their liberation struggle and had been granted the right by Abyei Protocol of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement to decide whether to remain in the North or join the South. This agreement, he noted, had not been implemented. He stressed that he had repeatedly called for the Implementation of the Abyei Protocol.

Bona wanted to assure the people of Abyei that nothing he had said was intended or should be construed to detract from his unwavering commitment to their cause. He noted that following the reconciliation with individual SPLM/A

leaders from Abyei on January 27, 2017, he and Francis Mading Deng went to Khartoum then to Abyei, and that he made his commitment to the cause of Abyei quite clear. He stressed that nothing had changed his position. He reaffirmed that he remained fully and unwaveringly committed to the January 2027 reconciliation agreement.

Bona also reiterated that his book was written at a time when he was in conflict with key members of Ngok leadership and that it should be read in that light. However, he welcomed any reaction to his book, and assured that nothing said in such reaction would adversely affect his commitment to reconciliation.

Bona, however, wanted to make a couple of points clear to the people of Abyei. Although agreements give them the right to determine their future, nothing can be achieved without the cooperation of the governments of Sudan and South Sudan. And there can be no genuine security and tranquility for the people of Abyei without peaceful coexistence and cooperation between the Dinka and their Missiriya Arab neighbors.

It should be noted that when Bona asserts that Abyei is not, or should not, be approached as a contested area between the Sudan and South Sudan, he is referring to military contest. Abyei is of course contested politically, economically and geographically, which is why it was a subject of negotiations in the peace process leading to the CPA. And that is why the Abyei Boundaries Commission was established and deployed to demarcate the borders between the Ngok Dinka and the Missiriya. And that is also why it was necessary to resort to the arbitration of the International Court of Arbitration.

Bona Malual's objective is in fact broader than the issue of Abyei, although the case of Abyei falls at the center of that objective. Bona correctly believes that the interests of the Sudan and South Sudan are closely interconnected and that it is indeed in the interest of both countries to resolve their differences peacefully and to develop amicable, cordial and cooperative relations between them. It is in this context that he believes that the case of Abyei should be pursued peacefully through a mutual agreement that serves the interests of both countries.

While the angry reaction of the Ngok Dinka to Bona's reported statements is understandable, his explanation should be appreciated. There should be no reason to doubt his repeated commitment to reconciliation and to the cause of Abyei. Antagonism will not serve any useful purpose. Working together in unity and solidarity is the best way to promote the interest of the Ngok Dinka. Difficult as the course of action proposed by Bona might be, it is in the long run the most practical and effective way of ensuring the peace, security, stability and development for the area of Abyei.



Annex

Acknowledgements:

- Chapter Two is based on article by Kuol, L., 2014, "Political Violence and the emergence of dispute over Abyei, Sudan, 1950-1983", Journal of Eastern African Studies Special Issue. Vol 8 (4) pp. 573-589.
- Chapter Four by Kuol Deim is dedicated to all the people who want to know the truth about the Abyei Area, and to the martyrs of the cause of the Abyei Area.
- Chapter Ten is based on article by Deng, L., 2010, "Justice in the Sudan: will the Award of the international Abyei Arbitration Tribunal be honoured?", Journal of Eastern African Studies Vol 4 (2) pp. 298-313.
- Chapter Eleven is largely informed by various communiqués of African Union Peace and Security Council (AUPSC) and my articles and opinions in Sudan Tribune and New Nation Newspaper.

Chapter Four Abbreviations and Acronyms:

AAA	Abyei Area Administration
AACR	Abyei Area Community Referendum
AACRHC	Abyei Area Community Referendum High Committee
ABC	Abyei Boundaries Commission
AU	African Union
BUTC	Bonga Unified Training Centre
CA	Chief Administrator

CPA	Comprehensive Peace Agreement
CSI	Christian Solidarity International
GHQs	General Headquarters
GOSS	Government of Southern Sudan
IGAD	Intergovernmental Authority on Development
IRWS	Institute of Revolutionary War Studies
SAF	Sudan Armed Forces
SIR	Sudan Intelligence Report
SPLA	Sudan People's Liberation Army
SPLM	Sudan People's Liberation Movement
UN	United Nations
USA	United States of America

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